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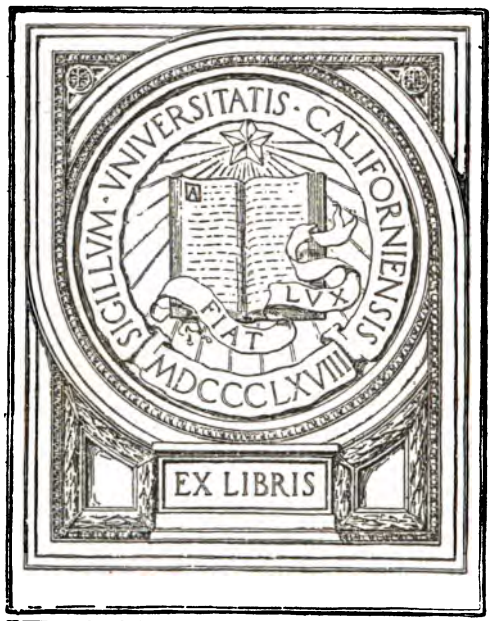
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Louise and Barnavaux

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

TRANSLATED BY B. DRILLIEN

TWO LITTLE PARISIANS

UNDER THE TRICOLOUR

WITH EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS
BY HELEN McKIE

BARNAVAUX

WITH EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS
BY HELEN McKIE

JOFFRE CHAPS

THE BODLEY HEAD

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CALIFORNIA

BARNAVAUX SEATED IN THE COMPANY OF A BIG FAIR MAN DRESSED IN WHITE

LOUISE AND BARNAVAUX

BY PIERRE MILLE

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY BÉRENGÈRE DRILLIEN WITH EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS BY HELEN McKIE

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PART I

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Louise and Barnavaux

PLÉVECH THE DESERTER

BARNAVAUX and his six companions had rejoined the Colonial Infantry.

Having just received their pay, they were enjoying themselves in the little wine-booths of Hanoi, and had already taken aboard as much liquor as they could carry. Long experience had so inured them to the practice, however, that few would have noticed they were not quite sober. The dinner which they had later on at the Café Lecointe, at the corner of the street, near the stall of Ah-Pik, the Chinese bootmaker, steadied their legs; and their heads alone remained a trifle hazy.

After the coffee, one of the six—Pouldu, I believe—suggested they should all go together to "wind up the evening at Madame Ti-Ka's."

Barnavaux nodded his approval.

Not liking, however, to be behindhand in the supply of ideas, he added:

"We ought to go on horseback on a day like this; it's so much more imposing!"

A Chinese boy fetched the horses, or ponies rather, little fellows from North Tonkin, with slender legs, plump hindquarters, rather thick necks, and eyes that sparkled from under their shaggy manes like those of some European youngster peering through a shock of tousled hair. A native sais attended each animal, running at its side, and no matter how fast the ponies galloped the sais kept pace; with their elbows close to their sides and their chests thrown forward, they never seemed to tire.

The six *marsouins*,[1] their great boots thrust as far as they would go into the stirrups, the reins clutched in both hands, put their chargers to the gallop. Rolling in their saddles, righting themselves from time to time with a jerk, they were insecure yet fearless, ridiculous yet fine, proud to the depths of their simple hearts.

"It's splendid," said Pouldu. "You

[1] A soldier of the Marines, or Colonial Infantry.

were quite right, Barnavaux; it is more imposing."

The cavalcade reached the banks of the Red River. First of all, the chimneys of a European factory came in sight, then a Chinese house of one storey, the narrow façade only fronting the road. It had an almost human appearance, resembling one of those grinning synthetic "faces" that children scrawl upon the walls in our part of the world. Two little dormer windows formed the eyes, below them a solitary window suggested the nose, while the door directly beneath it looked like the chinless mouth. Two beams starting from the dormer windows supported the pointed roof which, in Chinese fashion, terminated in comma-like curves, suggesting absurd tufts of hair.

As the men drew near, they heard the clatter of another procession coming from the opposite direction, and presently eight horsemen loomed out of the gloom. Only for the sais, the two bands must have collided, but a shrill, imperative whistle, proceeding from the set lips of the runners, stopped the horses dead, as though their legs had been severed at the knee by some

brutal hand. The shock was so great that here and there men were unhorsed. Barnavaux himself had fallen almost on to the neck of his mount, but he immediately drew himself up so that his sharp eyes might take in the scene before him.

"American sailors from the *Manhattan*," he cried. "They're going to Ti-Ka's too."

"That's good!" said Pouldu. He started to draw his sword-bayonet, the proper course in such circumstances, and Barnavaux followed his example.

When men of the same nationality or of the same branch of the service go in company to a house like Ti-Ka's, they make it a point of honour to keep out others of another country or another service. The blue jackets and caps of the Americans could be discerned in the failing light.

"Now, sailors don't carry bayonets," thought Barnavaux, "so that settles it; the victory is ours!"

His joy and amusement knew no bounds until a commanding voice rang out from among the enemy:

"Draw revolvers!"

The order was given in French; and, to his amazement Barnavaux, recognised the

voice. Springing from his horse, he called out:

"Plévech! It's you, Plévech?"

The other man had slipped from his horse at the same time as his companions, and replied sullenly:

"Yes, it's me!"

Then, among those he had hoped to slay, Barnavaux recognised Cloarec, Yves Le Blant, La Pige, and all the look-out men from the *Château-Renault.*

"Yes, it's me," Plévech repeated, assuming a haughty mien to cover the shame he really felt. "And supposing we have joined the Yankees, well, what then! We were sick to death of the *Château-Renault!*"

Barnavaux made no answer; he understood. The American navy is short of men, and of good gun-layers in particular, so she recruits them when she can from her neighbours, paying well for the desertion. It is a bad thing for a French cruiser anchored in one of her Colonial ports to witness the arrival of an American man-of-war.

Pouldu and Barnavaux quietly sheathed their bayonets.

"Peace is declared," said Pouldu, "so we can all go to Ti-Ka's together."

They had just reached a mean-looking entry, resembling a short, wide corridor, closed at one end. It really was a cul-de-sac, save that the left-hand wall had a little door in it that was outrageously banded with iron. Plévech knew the customs of the place as well as Barnavaux, so, giving the door a kick, he bawled out:

"Hi, Ti-Ka!"

A small trap-door, no bigger than a wicket, opened slowly in the ceiling, and a biscuit box was lowered at the end of a string.

"Must putee money in box first," said the voice of the invisible Madame Ti-Ka.

This was the invariable rule of the house; Madame Ti-Ka never opened the door without having first collected the usual tax in this strange receptacle. Both the soldiers and sailors were acquainted with the rite; and, untying a corner of their handkerchief or searching in their leather purses, they each produced two large silver coins and solemnly dropped them into the tin of Albert biscuits. Laden with over a hundred francs, the box ascended by means of the string.

These tipsy men, who a few minutes since had been on the point of murdering one another, looked on quietly. The idea of seizing the box and making off with the treasure never occurred to one of them: there are certain things permissible, and others the reverse, when one knows how to behave. They all prided themselves on knowing how to behave, for, though living in strange far-off countries might turn men into brutes, in a manner it also made gentlemen of them.

They could hear the piastres clinking overhead—Madame Ti-Ka was counting them. Then somebody raised an iron bar, drew the bolts, and the heavy door turned on its hinges. The men mounted the dirty stairs close on each other's heels, trying to shout and yell; but their ride had made them stiff, and also they were reflecting more than they would have cared to confess upon the fun in store for them—fun so rare in their soldier lives that even this house, in spite of its abomination, seemed splendid in their eyes.

Deep in their hearts they felt sad, and a jealousy without aim or object filled them. Each man of the two bands regretted the

declaration of peace, and would have preferred to turn out the other and remain sole masters of the place. Plévech in particular was gloomy, because he alone of them all had come there with a special desire to gratify.

"Look here," he said to Barnavaux, between clenched teeth, "one of them is called Mâo—she's for me, remember."

"All right, old man," answered Barnavaux, astonished, "all right."

They were standing beneath the roof of an enormous building that partly resembled a native hut, and partly the cupola of a temple. The lamps had been smoking, and an odour of petroleum and soot pervaded the place, but it was mingled with sweet perfumes, and the scent of real flowers. Magnolia, jessamine, and branches of ylang-ylang were dying in all the corners of the room, for the women were Laos, and wherever the Lao women go you are sure to find flowers. These daughters of a country of glades and forests, whose bodies seem filled with caresses, are ever in harmony with those indefinable things that are themselves a caress, such as the amorous breath of blossoming flowers; as the softer kind of

music that makes no continued melody; as soft-hued fabrics whose delicacy is enhanced by a brightly-coloured blossom worn in the hair or on the breast.

There were twelve girls, all of them very young, and recruited from Upper Mekong by Madame Ti-Ka. As they crouched round this golden-hued hut, upon the straw mats of a low divan, their faces had the tint of pale gold. Only their rather coarse hair and wild-looking eyes were black, and veils of pale green, pink, or salmon-coloured muslin clothed them as far as the breast.

Drinks were now brought. Plévech was rich, so he offered champagne and drank from the glass of Mâo, the most beautiful of them all. The others felt a little awkward, because he so quickly showed that she was his choice.

"And it's really true, then, Plévech," said Barnavaux, "that you've deserted from the *Château-Renault?*"

"Well, and what if I have?" returned Plévech roughly. "I'm not a slave, I'm a child of the times, a syndicalist, and a revolutionary. I don't care a damn for my country or anything else. I go where they make it worth my while."

The Americans had given him gold in return for his desertion, and he pulled out a handful of five-dollar pieces, that made Barnavaux's companions feel vaguely jealous.

"But, Plévech," continued Barnavaux, "you're a married man, aren't you, with a wife at Paimpol?"

"Not at Paimpol," answered Plévech, "at Plouha."

It was not for the sake of determining the place that he had corrected Barnavaux, but Plouha called up in his mind's eye a vision of a low stone house and a wide market-place with a great church; a stream, whose water, that looked green by reason of the moss-grown stones beneath it, trickled to a lonely shore that sloped down to meet the ever-moving sea—a shore shaped like a horse-shoe, with pebbles terraced by the waves.

"I'll look after the missis," went on Plévech. "She and the kids won't starve, but I'm going to look after number one too! I'm going to live, and why shouldn't I? Who's going to blame me?"

The other deserters chuckled.

"Who's blaming us?" they chorused.

Pouldu muttered between his teeth:

"Yes, he'd better send his pay home; there's another mouth to feed there now."

"What's that you say?" demanded Plévech, pricking up his ears. "Don't make remarks I can't follow about me, do you hear?"

"Just as you like," said Pouldu sarcastically. "You aren't wanted there now, anyway, so you may as well stay here. Your wife's had another kid, by some one or the other, for I come from Plouha, and have just returned from leave. There's another kid in your house, that's certain."

"*Nom de Dieu!* You lie!" roared Plévech.

Mâo uttered a shriek, for Plévech had hurled the empty bottle at Pouldu's head; it missed him, but stuck in the straw like a bullet in a wall. The other seven deserters rose to their feet, and it looked as though blows would be struck after all.

Plévech, however, no longer wished to fight, but was now burning to know everything. All men are the same: they must find out the truth about such matters!

Barnavaux had already seized him, and held him between his knees, almost tenderly

it seemed. Then Pouldu fell back again upon the mat.

"Say it's not true, Pouldu; say you were fooling. It was only a joke?" cried Plévech.

Pouldu defied Barnavaux' glance, for he was still drunk and bitter. He raised his right hand, and spat upon the floor.

"I'll take my solemn oath of it," he said.

Plévech's head and neck began to move as though he were gasping for breath, and Mâo, seeing his anguish without understanding all that had been said, slid upon the floor and embraced his knees.

"What difference can it make to you?" asked Barnavaux, in astonishment. "You've just told us you never intend to go back to France, as it's not your country any longer."

Barnavaux felt the sailor's muscles relax like those of a man who is not angry but very ill, and heard him mutter:

"It *is* my country, after all; I realise that now, and it hurts me to think that I've been robbed of what belongs to me. I must go back. I must return. I can't put up with such a thing in my house."

Barnavaux gently stroked the head of

Mâo, who was still on her knees. She understood quite well that this caress was not meant for her, but merely as a counsel, a request to her to be kind to his comrade. She got up to embrace Plévech, and the flower in her hair crushed against the sailor's face. He pushed her away.

"Yes," he said, "I wish I could, but I can't. I can't console myself that way now; it's no good. I want that other woman over there, now I know I've been robbed of her." Then, slowly, as though amazed at the mysterious process at work within him, he added, "This woman here, I've no eyes for her now."

He got up, feeling his heart like a man surprised to find himself still alive, and walked towards the doorway.

"Where are you going, Plévech?" cried Barnavaux.

"On board the *Château-Renault*," he replied. "They'll put me in irons, and court-martial me, but nothing matters as long as I get home again."

The other deserters silently fell into step with him.

"And what about the rest of you?" asked Barnavaux.

They disregarded the question, having acted instinctively.

"We're going with him," said one of them at last. "We're going back to the *Château-Renault*. We can't let him go alone, now that he's down on his luck."

. . . . . .

Plévech could not write, and he was too proud to let his wife know by the hand of a comrade that he was aware of what had taken place at home. Another thing that unconsciously worried him was the fact that, since he had heard of his misfortune, everything had gone its way just as usual.

His absence from the *Château-Renault* had lasted barely six days, and so he had not been entered as a deserter, nor court-martialled, but had got off with the irons and fatigue duty of ordinary punishments.

At the back of his head, Plévech, in some vague way, connected the ennui of his punishment with the frailty of his wife, and he turned the matter over and over in his mind with a gloating anger, and the determination to be avenged, for surely that was his due.

During the eighteen months that elapsed

before he received his discharge, he accomplished his round of duty with the regularity of the seasons and stars; and he was amazed when he found himself doing the same things at the same hours, being unceasingly ordered hither and thither, compelled to live in a land where the men, the trees, even the roofs of the houses were so different from those of his own country.

He could not bring himself to realise the incident that had taken place at the other end of the earth; he knew that it had happened, but he was unable to grasp the fact.

Now that is why such simple souls seek the aid of drink: drunkenness supplies them with imagination. When Plévech could make no more of his case, he would say to himself, "When I thought that way, I was drunk!"

But he was mistaken; he had need of alcohol to know himself as he really was—a man of sentiment, of fine feeling, and of dour morals.

When, however, the *Cachar* brought him home once more to Brest, the moment he was at liberty to come and go as he wished, he experienced a great loneliness, like the

loneliness of an unharnessed horse that cannot find its stable.

The women in the houses only excited his desire, inasmuch as they reminded him of the one for whom he was waiting, and yet he gazed upon them with a kind of savage exaltation, not knowing whether he wanted to caress or to strike them. Then his old trouble would return, and he would become obsessed with the idea that in duty bound he must return home and administer the necessary chastisement. Absinth and brandy caused him to regard the imposition of this penalty as a pleasure in store; and he chuckled to himself as he thought of it.

At Guingamp, where he was forced to wait in a cold and badly-lighted room for the train to take him on to Plouha, his evil thoughts possessed him. The hours during which drunkenness beats a slow retreat are ever full of harrowing anguish, above all throughout the night. One still sees things from the excited point of view brought about by alcohol, but with a depression of spirits that would be unbearable save for an eager longing to be avenged. At such moments, a man feels from the very depths of his soul that his suffering is caused by another, whom

he cannot forgive, because after such an impossible forgiveness he would have only to die, for life would be utterly hollow and abhorrent. Yes, in the night murder and suicide seem the only course possible under such circumstances.

Plévech was trembling from head to foot, and his limbs were icy cold, but his will was fixed and his mind made up. That which had been done was contrary to all he had a right to expect. A thing too horrible had happened in his house—a child reared on his pay, his hard-earned pence, while he had been wandering on the sea. He dwelt on the abominable cowardly injustice done to him, an injustice that darkened the very sun, an injustice that had to be wiped out, *nom de Dieu!*

It was 7.30 in the morning when the train stopped at Plouha. It was raining, so Plévech put on his cloak mechanically, and took his bundle well into shelter beneath it, like a man careful of his own; then he set off towards his cottage.

When he arrived there, he struck three times on the door with his clenched first. The woman was about, undoubtedly, for he could hear her active hands moving

among the fire-irons, and the pots and pans. He could also hear a child's footsteps.

"Who is it?" said his wife.

"It's me, Jeannie," answered Plévech. "Open the door!"

The tone of his voice shocked him. It seemed so strange that it could resound thus outside of him, for since the evening before he had heard nothing but inner voices.

"*Mon Dieu!*" cried Jeannie.

She was not aware that Plévech knew the truth, and it seemed an awful thing to have to tell him or to show him, but she unhesitatingly drew the bolt, because he was the master. The children trailed along behind her, partly for fun, and partly because they were curious to see the man who so curtly ordered their mother to open the door.

Michel, the eldest, was there, and the little girls, Amandine and Léa, but Julot, the bastard, was still sitting at the table in his rush-bottomed, high chair, and unable to move away by reason of a rail fastened across the front to keep him from falling out.

When the door began to open, Plévech gave it a shove with his shoulder that sent

HE STRUCK THREE TIMES ON THE DOOR WITH HIS CLENCHED FIST

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it banging against the wall; then he saw his wife standing in the doorway.

She stood there with her body bent a little forward, and her hands clasped, but with her brow unruffled and her eyes clear. She broke the silence with:

"So you're back at last, my man."

Without deigning a reply, Plévech struck her a blow on the face, stripping the flesh from her cheek with his fist as easily as one strips the rind of an over-ripe fruit. He struck with such force that she fell in a heap, her head under the table by Julot's high chair, and her cry as she fell set all the children screaming.

It was the voice of Julot that brought her to herself again. But for that she would have feigned death, and besides, she felt sick with the shock of the blow. But there was the little one! What would her husband do to the baby?

With a savage, silent spring she was again on her feet before one could realise what had happened. In a second she had slipped behind Plévech, and pushed the child into the road, saying to his elder brother, Michel:

"Take the baby away; run as quickly as you can, behind the church—anywhere!"

Turning, she clenched her fists and held them before her like a wild beast preparing to fight. Plévech continued to thrash her; and when, from time to time, his wife's fingers approached too close to his eyes, he took them in his hands and twisted them brutally, until he brought her to her knees and felled her to the ground. Occasionally he struck at her shoulders and breast, vaguely astonished at the soft sounds produced by the blows, so soft that they seemed insufficient for the venting of his fury. He struck her again and again with his open hand; and she cried out, in terror more than from pain, because she thought he intended to kill her.

The two little girls, Amandine and Léa, were now dumb with horror, and the elder was clasping the younger in her arms. By the way, the innate difference in the disposition of the two sexes is shown at an early age. When confronted by a danger from which there seems to be no way of escape, little boys square up instinctively and clench their tiny fists, while little girls cling to one another, the bigger clasping the smaller. They are acting as they will later in life, when grown men and women.

Plévech stumbled across them on his path of vengeance, and kicked them so hard that the group composed of their two little clinging bodies collapsed without separating. They lay there on the stone floor with eyes of terror.

Plévech was sorry for what he had done; he had not meant to hurt his own children; moreover, he was not at all sure of what he was doing. Another man had been striking those blows, while the Plévech he knew had gone no one knows whither.

Now he had come back, however, as weak as though he had passed through a terrible illness, weak enough to moan and to weep, and to beg to be nursed. Nevertheless he continued to say to himself, "I've been wronged, I've been wronged!" He wanted to convince himself that it was really he who had acted, and that in acting thus he had done the right thing. A humour that very much resembled "sulks" was succeeding his righteous anger, and the pettiness of it humiliated him.

"Where is he?" he cried.

He meant the bastard child; but his wife lay still on the floor, with her face

buried in her hands and hair, both of which were stained with blood.

Plévech shrugged his shoulders as though he were not responsible, and went out of the house. Outside, Pouldu's brother, a cattle-dealer, greeted him ; he knew that Plévech had been putting his affairs in order, and all the people in the street had left their houses to come and listen to the row. But when Plévech came out, they all retreated into their own homes, with the exception of Pouldu, who had more confidence, because he knew Plévech better than they did.

"Hullo, Plévech," he said, going up to him, "you've come back then. Come to Narcisse's and have a drink."

They went off together to Narcisse Cloarec's inn.

"What will you drink ?" asked Pouldu. "Absinth ?"

At that moment Plévech became aware of the burning thirst that consumed him. The saliva in his mouth seemed to have solidified, and tasted so bitter that he could not swallow.

"No," he answered, "*une bolée*. I'll have cider, and plenty of it."

He spoke plaintively, as though he had just got up from a bed of sickness, but Pouldu pretended that he didn't notice it. He ordered the cider, and Plévech began to drink like a man in a desert dying of thirst.

Pouldu was silent upon all that did not concern him; he talked the gossip of the countryside, and of his own children. Presently, however, he said:

"Have you seen your boy, Michel, yet?"

"No," answered Plévech, "he wasn't there."

"He's a fine lad, I must say," went on Pouldu, in a soothing tone. "He got over his illness splendidly."

"What do you mean by 'got over his illness?'" asked Plévech. He was still stupefied, and the words seemed to reach him from a very long distance. "What illness?" he repeated.

"Don't you know?" said Pouldu. "Why, he had typhoid, and every one thought he would die. The last time the doctor came, he said, 'They're poor folk, and it's no use my making them pay for nothing; the boy's done for!' So Mother

Le Blant put the pigeon on him. You know, don't you ?"

Yes, Plévech knew. In Brittany, when people are dying of some dreadful fever, their friends cut open a live pigeon, and place the writhing creature on the head of the dying person. It is not a remedy, but a charm, older than the Christian religion; it is offered as a bloody sacrifice—offered to induce a miracle.

"So your Michel recovered! Every one thought he would be an idiot all his life, or dumb, as often happens, but he recovered completely, and was so tall when he got about again that no one knew him."

Plévech was listening, scarcely grasping what was said, overwhelmed at the thought that a yet greater misfortune might have greeted him than the one which had gnawed at his heart all this time. It seemed appalling! It hardly seemed possible that Michel, his eldest-born, had nearly died. All sailors are as proud of their first-born as if he were a prince.

"Michel was ill, you say? Very ill?"

"Yes, *mon vieux*."

Pouldu tried to talk of other things, but Plévech continued:

"So ill they had to put the pigeon on him, and now he is quite well again. Are you sure?"

He fell into such deep thought that Pouldu got bored.

"It's after ten now," he said. "I'm off!"

Plévech returned home so agitated that he did not even notice that he was hungry. His wife had prepared a meal.

Have you ever seen ants who, though half crushed to death, still continue to carry their burden and to finish their task? Housewives are much the same, I think.

The children were waiting, in duty bound, until the master returned before commencing their meal; and Michel, looking straight at Plévech as he entered, said gently:

"Good morning, father."

Plévech raised him in his arms as though to test his weight. He put him down, and took him in his arms again, all without feeling the slightest desire to kiss him, so overwhelmed was he to find him still alive.

"He must have his breakfast; we must all eat," he said.

At that very moment he heard the munching sound of some one eating bread and

butter. It was Julot, hidden between the fireplace and the huge oak bed—the very bed where he had been born. Plévech moved, and the mother silently placed herself between him and the child.

Then, seriously, hesitatingly, as though he had newly discovered in the world around him things whose existence he had hitherto ignored, and which he was yet unable to express, he said:

"No matter, no matter. I'd rather it was that than that there should be one missing."

So Jeannie helped the soup. Her back was almost breaking, and beneath her hair her head was one great bruise. She scarcely felt the pain, however.

Plévech drew his chair up to the table.

BILLY HOOK'S NIGHT-OUT

I DON'T think that Barnavaux ever heard the end of Plévech's story, nor do I think that he was interested in it. Old soldiers are indifferent to affairs of the heart; in common with the cloistered monk they have contempt for such matters; only in the soldier's case it is a nasty sort of contempt.

The chaste ignorance of the monks guards them from the cynical brutality in which Barnavaux could indulge. He imagined that he knew all that there was to be known about women, because he had owned them, and he talked such utter nonsense about them that when he was on the topic I did my best not to listen.

They say that sooner or later a man goes through the mill of a love affair; I really thought, however, that Barnavaux would be the exception that proves the rule. That I was mistaken will be shown later.

He had his code of honour, for the time

being, ugly and cruel though it was. It consisted, as far as one could see, in the conviction that to a healthy, normal man one woman was as good as another; and it was from this point of view that he discussed Plévech's conduct, whenever the memory of that night at Ti-ka's returned to us.

He thought Plévech's attitude inexplicable and fatal. His experience, his horrible and sordid experience, had taught him that to fly in the face of the principle of having no particular choice was to invite disaster.

"There was a man I knew," he began one day, "called Billy Hook, an English supercargo that I met on the boat the first time I went through the Red Sea on my way to Tonkin. Well, poor fellow, it wasn't his fault that he had chosen his woman; he didn't do it wilfully, yet an awful thing happened to her in consequence. As for the other man, well the English hanged him just because he, too, preferred one woman to all others. It came about at Port Said, at Mrs. Coxon's bar—'bar' being a polite term by the way. You know Port Said, don't you? Well, isn't it a rotten place?"

His face assumed an expression of contempt and horror. Barnavaux horrified,

forsooth! Knowing the place, however, I understood; his expression did not surprise me. Things have changed a little nowadays since the English have "moralised" the town; on the surface, be it understood, for doubtless under the surface things remain as they were.

The "moralising" of towns is no more nor less than the covering up of their vices, much in the same way that one covers up one's body. The desires, the defects, the strength of the muscles, the sweat that bathes it, the fury that drives it, and the weakness that lays it low are all there unchanged.

Fifteen years ago Port Said was an open hell in perpetual daylight. In perpetual daylight because the electric lamps were never extinguished in the streets, shops, cafés, gambling dens, bars, and those other houses which, like the name of Satan in the days of religion, "must not be mentioned."

It should be remembered that every hour brings new boats to this Mediterranean mouth of the Suez Canal, and that they only remain long enough to coal and then resume their journey.

Time in these crowded docks is money,

and it is more precious here than anywhere else. Night and day the coal porters run to and fro with their baskets on the heads, while soldiers, sailors, officers, emigrants—all those who are travelling towards the rising sun, and those who are returning thence—hustle each other in the long, straight avenues, and upon the cement pavements of the town.

They think to themselves, "It's still Europe here!" or, "It's almost Europe now! We can get anything we want here!" They don't mind much if the quality of the thing is base; they have no time—perhaps, too, they will soon be dead.

I remember that fifteen years ago all the roulette tables in the gaming houses were faked, and all the croupiers were thieves. Sailors could be seen drinking long after they were unable to stand, held up on either side by a negro.

There were curiosity shops labelled with black letters on long strips of white calico: "Ahmed ben Ahmed. Photographies obscènes et de monuments," in a French at once elliptical yet vigorous.

And the women! Spaniards, Frenchwomen, Roumanians, Germans, Negresses,

and Somalis? And one veiled woman in black who was always to be found in the same dark corner near the statue of M. de Lesseps. She was nicknamed, "the sailors' fine lady," and she conveyed to the poor devils an impression of luxury. Drunk when they came to her, they became more intoxicated with the mystery that surrounded her.

"At the far end of the town," continued Barnavaux, "in the midst of a garden reclaimed from the sand, is Madame Coxon's bar. You know the place, the American house, where the rich folk go?

"Billy Hook and I had gone there together. I never saw him again after that night, but I expect he is still alive. Drink had no effect upon him, though he drank heavily; he was always calm and collected, the slight dilation of the pupils of his wild cat eyes alone giving him away.

"I think that nowadays the English are the only people who believe that they are damned when they have committed certain acts; Billy Hook thought himself damned irrevocably, being an Englishman, and a Protestant to boot; for neither the race nor the religion admits of the redemption of sins

by confession and repentance. They think that grace must come down and do its work unaided. I don't know if he really enjoyed himself much, living and acting as he did. There was no other course open to him, that was all. He was always as cool, however, as a captain who has made up his mind to win a football match.

"While we were having a whisky and soda at the bar, an Albanian sailor came in. He was short and thin, with wild-looking eyes. Ordering a bottle of lemonade he said to Madame Coxon, 'Where's Miss Clary?' 'She's not here, deary,' replied the beldame, 'but there are the other ladies.' The man made no answer, but took his bottle and glass to a little table at the other end of the saloon, and sat down.

"The incident stirred Billy's memory, so he said calmly, 'Suppose I ought to go up to Clary again.' It was one of the rules of the house, a strange rule, but one often found in English-speaking countries, that no drinks should be served in the rooms, and Madame Coxon was very strict upon the point.

"Billy Hook had said to Madame Coxon, 'I want Clary this evening,' and had taken

her upstairs somewhere. Every half-hour or so he returned as calm and quiet as ever to the bar, and had another whisky and soda, chatting away the while and never giving a thought to the woman he had hired, nor thinking of her sufficiently to offer her a drink.

"He was a man who, on principle, thought of nobody but himself. After he had announced that he ought to 'go back to Clary' he didn't seem to be in the slightest hurry to do so; it was the woman's place to wait, and Madame Coxon knew that he was a good customer, so she offered no remark.

"The Albanian sailor had been sitting at the little table, his lemonade before him, and no one noticed that, since Billy Hook's remark, he had removed his shoes and gone out of the room. Besides, if anyone had noticed it, he had paid for his drink and had gone; there was nothing in that! He had taken off his shoes? Well, perhaps that was strange, but if one had to notice everybody's little vagaries on a night-out in Port Said!

"Suddenly we heard a cry, a long, awful cry, sounding—forgive the comparison, but

I can think of no other—like the whistle of a train travelling along a deep cutting at express speed. Then imagine the train entering a tunnel; the sound doesn't stop of itself, it is as though choked off, and that just describes the cry we heard.

"They say that fear sobers a man, but I know that's not always true. Some drunkards are so overcome by fear that they collapse utterly. Others do worse. Of those who were with us, two left the room and were very sick. The rest flew upstairs with Billy at their head.

We were surrounded now by American women, pretty, red-haired Americans, in full evening dress, shrieking with terror. Higher up we heard innumerable feet running along the corridors, men and women.

"'It came from my room,' said Billy. His tone was a little shorter than usual, but he had said 'my room,' not 'Clary's room.' He always appropriated everything and made himself at home everywhere.

"Yes, it had come from Clary's room, and she had cried out too late! To this day I can see that room, with its whitewashed walls, against which the coloured pictures screamed. I can see the black and white

tiled floor, the brass bedstead, and the wicker arm-chair painted with ripolin. Clary had not had time to get up from the chair where she had been waiting; the single stroke of a knife had severed her jugular vein.

"She was clothed in one black garment that clung to her white body. On her throat a gold filigree necklace gleamed in patches through the blood. Some one recalled to mind the Albanian sailor, his wild eyes, and the sound of his voice, and exclaimed, 'It must be he, he hasn't had time to get away; he must be still in the house.' Beds were turned upside down, the cupboards kicked in, and mattresses ripped open, all in vain. There was no one to be seen on the terrace, only an empty stretch of cement flagging gleamed white in the moonlight.

"Billy Hook looked over the balcony, and saw two hands clinging to the balustrade. The Albanian was there suspended in the air. Billy seized the collar of his tunic, others tore away the clinging hands, and the murderer was dragged up. His teeth chattered and his cheeks seemed to have fallen in, as though he had suddenly grown old and emaciated. The most no-

ticeable of his features were his long thin nose, and the two pale-coloured caverns of his terror-stricken eyes, glaring in the moonlight.

"They would have killed him then and there, and I, for one, could see no reason why they should not, but two policemen had come along, two chocolate-coloured fellahs dressed like English soldiers, and being only too proud to arrest a white man, they took him in charge.

"'It was you,' said Billy Hook in English, 'it was you that did it?' They never say 'thou,' the English, even in moments of intense excitement, and the 'you' seemed to impart a measured politeness to the sentence. 'Yes, I did it,' the Albanian replied, 'and I can't think why I didn't kill you instead.' I understood him, or thought I did. He had gone there to claim Clary, whom he loved furiously, if for no other reason than because she could not belong to him alone. But when he saw before him in the flesh the man who had taken her from him, he pictured the whole thing to himself—the whole thing! So he had killed her at the very moment when he had been going to her, thinking, perhaps—in any case, it was a

different motive that had urged him to kill her.

"'Yes, why didn't you kill me instead?' returned Billy slowly. 'I didn't know that you wanted her particularly—she was nothing to me.' He pondered awhile, and then said solemnly, 'I am sorry; I really am sorry.' The two policemen took off the murderer. After whistling a moment through his teeth, Billy, turning to Madame Coxon, asked, 'Where are the other ladies?'

"He said that," explained Barnavaux seriously, "because he hadn't finished his night-out, and he didn't intend to cut it short! So you can see," he added, "how dangerous it is to want one woman more than another. Now if Billy Hook had only known—but there, you never can tell!"

CHINAMEN

"HULLO!" said Barnavaux, "there's that fellow again from the Foreign Legion lying over there."

It was only by the badge on his white helmet, a helmet, by the way, that almost obscured his face, that one could tell the man belonged to the Foreign Legion, for, stretched as he was on his stomach, the buttons of his tattered khaki uniform were hidden from view.

He wasn't asleep, because the gleam of his wide-open eyes could be seen, close to the ground, apparently searching in the grass for something; nor was he drunk, for the hand that played aimlessly with a piece of wood did not tremble.

Barnavaux, taking no further notice of him, continued:

"The Red River doesn't look so bad from here after all!"

We were on the revictualling road, between the stations of Po-Lou and Loa-Kay.

Clear little streams ran down the slope, singing merrily over the pebbles beneath them. Fragile, yet gigantic bamboo trees soared into the sky, straight, supple and light, diffusing joy and delight around them.

Further on, enormous trees scaled the white and blue limestone cliffs, their smooth white trunks looking like marble columns. When the bamboos came to an end, wild bananas covered the hilly ground, their round stems so spongy that where one plunged a stick into them a clear sap trickled from the wound; and their huge leaves rose symmetrically to surround the drooping stalk of an enormous flower, longer than one's arm, and of as rich and warm a crimson as the velvet of a processional banner. Upon this great motionless flower were what appeared to be smaller red flowers, almost scarlet, in fact, that trembled and quivered. It was only a gathering of little birds that flew away at our approach—tiny birds drunk with honey!

The odour of decay and fertility arose from the black earth, the smell of germinating grain and the smell of insects. Insects have their own peculiar smell, and on days

when the sun throws his rays abroad, their almost invisible myriads fly and crawl, hunt and kill, mate, and tend their eggs and chrysalides. They are everywhere; among the grasses, in the air, and under the heavy earth.

Still further away, beyond the fields and trees, the Red River rushed madly along, as wide there as the Seine; full of rapids and soiled by the red clay dragged from the crumbling rocky banks to be carried southward to the delta of populous Tonkin.

Labouring patiently up the river under plaited straw sails were great Chinese junks, propelled by men running backwards and forwards, agile, patient, and indefatigable, plying unceasingly their iron-shod rattan poles. Their skin was yellow, verging either on black or red, and their bodies so bent that from a distance they seemed to crawl upon their hands and feet.

"They look for all the world like ants!" said Barnavaux.

Then the man lying in the grass lifted his head and smiled. He had weird eyes of a golden-brown, with a queer grey ring around the pupils, and his face was the face of a man from the North. With his rough

hair and thick, fair beard, he looked like a big, playful, intelligent dog; where his face was free from hair it was covered with freckles.

"Yes," he said, "they are the ants that come from the great ant-hills over yonder."

He peered towards the north, towards the mountainous horizon beyond which was China, and the great wide lands of the yellow people.

"He was a Russian officer once," observed Barnavaux in a whisper. "They say he was in the navy and at Port Arthur during the war. Then he deserted, and came here to enlist in the Legion. Why did he do that? Probably for no reason whatever; he's a bit touched, that's all, and he isn't the only one by any means."

I am sure the man heard Barnavaux's remark, but he smiled again.

"Look at the real ants," he said. "Aren't they similar to the others?"

Then I saw he was lying with his head across the track of a number of large red ants, and that he was musing over them, like a big, idle child.

"Look at this one," he continued. "She's not carrying anything and seems lost.

Just look now how frightened and cowardly she is when I touch her with this bit of stick! She has lost her head completely, and tries madly to get away. Now watch this one that is carrying home a straw. Nothing turns her from her path of duty. Look, I'll drop this stone upon her. She's half crushed to death, but doesn't seem to care. She emerges with only three legs, a crushed body, and with one of her antennæ broken; but she still clings to her bit of straw. Look! she doesn't even try to escape. She bites and struggles against me, against me, forsooth, who am so great a monster to her that her eyes cannot take in the whole of me!

"Do you grasp what all this means? It's this; that an ant at work is like a somnambulist. She thinks of nothing save her work; she has lost her will, yes, even her desire for self-preservation. Possibly it is the same with birds when building their nests, or rearing their young. It is what is called 'instinct,' a force that is greater than the individual.

"Well, the yellow races, these millions of yellow folk, resemble the ants and the birds. They are all sleep-walkers when at their

work, and for that reason alone they fill me with dread."

A look of fear came over his dog-like face, an expression so dreadful that I longed to get away from it.

"I was on the *Petropavlosk*" he continued dreamily, "on the *Petropavlosk*."

"That was the cruiser commanded by Admiral Makarof, and that was blown up at Port Arthur," whispered Barnavaux. "Poor devil! now I can understand why he's——" and he tapped his forehead with his finger.

"The horror of it," murmured the Russian, "the horror of it! You needn't trouble to lower your voices when you say that I'm mad, because I don't mind you thinking so. You're a bit wide of the mark, though. My head is right enough, but my nerves are all wrong, and—and perhaps also my outlook on life. I can't stand a door banging behind; and, if anyone unexpectedly puts a hand on my shoulder, I almost collapse. But my memory is good and my head clear, for I forget nothing, and I remember one thing of which you know nothing, and it makes me fear for the future, fear for the white races.

"It was like this. The admiral refused to begin the action; he was merely out to give the crew a little exercise, especially the officers; he didn't expect anything serious, even when the great shells began to fall thick and fast. The enemy's fire seemed so ill-directed that no harm was done. Even when the shells did begin to reach us, there still remained a stretch of water where no shells fell, though all around it the missiles pattered down like a shower of hail. It was all a ruse—it was to this calm stretch of water that they wished us to go. Nobody aboard realised the scheme, so we steered towards the peaceful water.

"We had hardly got outside the harbour, we could still see with the naked eye the arms of the semaphores on shore. The enemy increased the fury of his fire. A shell struck the signal-mast and shattered it to atoms; the officer on duty was killed on the spot, and I remember that part of his entrails, and his diaphragm that looked like a piece of white translucent rag, were left clinging to the wreckage, like butcher's meat hanging up for sale. Everything began to go wrong; the administration

appeared to be paralysed; the electricity cut off.

"The admiral did issue orders, but then who was in charge of the electricity? Whose duty was it to superintend the *monte-charge?* 'Piotre Ephimovitch, is it yours?' 'Is it yours, Serguieief?' No one seemed to know; I don't believe anyone ever had known. Ah, the shame of it, the shame of it! I tell you that no man knew his post, and all stood round, staring and helpless. When things were at this crisis, a little canoe appeared, a dirty little Chinese canoe, manned by two natives, who were trying to cut across our track and join us, and it was along the course chosen by this canoe that the firing was most furious.

"Small shells burst above it, and heavy shells exploded around it on every hand; yet this absurd little cockle shell paddled along without apparent haste, its two oars dipping rhythmically into the water. What on earth could they be after! What did they want with us! They brought information of some sort for certain; men would not risk such a death but for some sacred duty, for the execution of some pressing order.

"We hove to, the canoe pulled up at our bows, and a man came aboard. He was a Chinese, and he carried a wicker basket, heavily laden. Placing it on the deck, he bowed very low with his hands crossed on his breast. A projectile burst apart, and four men fell, horribly mutilated. The Chinaman bowed a second time with a face void of expression.

"Stepanof, an officer of Fusiliers who was standing by, rushed up to him. 'What is it?' he cried. 'Why are you here? Where do you come from? Speak!' For the third time the Chinaman bowed, and then answered in pidgin-English, 'Who belong number one man? Who talkee all light? Just now clothes have got. Muchee hurry! Chop, chop!' He opened his basket as though it contained the Sacred Host, when collars, pyjamas, and white suits appeared, carefully arranged in parcels for each customer.

"It was the laundryman! He had been told to bring back the washing at ten o'clock, and when he reached the quay, 'ship he walkee.' So he got into the canoe with his son—his son, mind you!—for hadn't he been told to bring the clothes,

at ten! He drew out his tally sticks, like those used by bakers in some European countries, 'Just now clothes have got. Who talkee all light?' he repeated, quite calmly.

"We had just entered the stretch of water I mentioned before, the strip of calm water that didn't seem to come within the firing line, and we were all staring at the Chinaman, staggered at his courage, his heroism, his indifference. No, it was something more than all that. All those words are European words, and don't come near the truth. We were overwhelmed, we were humiliated, because the Chinaman had done just what he had to do, without thinking of aught beside, while we!

"The shower of projectiles no longer fell around us; intoxicated with what we had gone through, our heads in a whirl, we said to ourselves, 'It's over! we've escaped this time!' Then the men, myself included probably, began to crack jokes as we stood round the Chinee; we thought we were safe; we were thankful, and—ashamed. 'Just now talkee some man tally clothes,' continued the Chinaman politely, and taking his tally sticks, he called, 'Lieutenant Piotre Ephimovitch.' 'You want to see

Piotre Ephimovitch?' asked some one; 'well, there he is,' and he pointed to the signal mast that held the horrible remains.

"The Chinaman looked up, and I don't know what he would have replied, and nobody ever will know for that matter, because we had reached the death-trap; the trap into which we had been lured, the calm stretch among the troubled water with the mines beneath.

"We didn't suffer much after all! It's merely like having one's heart forced out of one's body. I saw the sea surge up in two huge columns, but our ship never rose again. She had been cut in two. That shows you the value of the lives of fifteen hundred men: in a little while their bodies have rotted, and are no more. They picked me up——"

"What about the Chinaman?" I interrupted.

"How should I know?" said the *légionnaire*, his voice growing suddenly angry, "besides, what is that to you? There are too many of them, I tell you, six hundred millions on their ant-hills at their work, sleep-walkers every one of them, just like the real ants." He tried to force a steadier expression into his wild eyes. "I joined

the *légion*," he continued, "for the sake of the discipline, I *will* learn discipline, for without it what will be the end of us all? What will happen to the white races?"

FOR A THOUSAND PIASTRES

TI-SOI knew quite well whither they were taking him, for the evening before, with the yoke still around his neck, he had been led out of prison to dig his grave, a custom observed to this day in Tonkin.

In accordance with the law of his ancestors, when a man has been condemned to death by a native tribunal he digs his own grave, helped by his fellow-prisoners, fellow-inmates of the *canha-pha*, where, through its wonderful kindness, one is fed at the government's expense.

It did not seem to Ti-Soi that he was receiving unkind, or extraordinary treatment. He knew what was in store for him, but was supremely indifferent.

Possibly it is a mistaken idea of the civilised that, by curtailing the period of waiting, they lessen the terrors of death. Imagine that the reverse were the case. Suppose that the soul, mind, brain, or whatever you

are pleased to call it, needed time in order to get familiar with the idea of approaching death, and that the body needed a while in which to become weary and detached. The knowledge of the fate in store for one banishes, by some mysterious means, the desire to escape it. One would resemble more a person about to die a natural death, one would be more reconciled, and feel as though one were only half of this world, like a Catholic who has received absolution and extreme unction.

Now that is as it should be, and no doubt it accounts for the apparent indifference exhibited by the Chinese when condemned to death.

See how they behave in a fire, a wreck, or a battle. If a chance of escape still remains they show much greater fear than a white man does—they quake and look terrified—but in the supreme hour of inevitable death they are much braver than we.

So Ti-Soi carried with a quiet step the head he was so soon to lose.

Behind him, as he could well see, marched the executioner, preceded by the herald, whose duty it was to blow a resounding blast

upon a trumpet, and to announce to all the crimes committed by and the sentence passed upon the said Ti-Soi, pirate, smuggler and rebel.

The executioner wore a red tunic, displaying his strong, bare legs. He was a small, but sturdily built man, with a thick neck, and on his shoulder he carried an enormous sword with a broad blade, the rough handle of which was covered with a green cord, the better to ensure him a firm grip. Thus Ti-Soi went to his execution.

The escort of Chinese *tirailleurs* were in puttees and khaki uniforms; and, with their black pigtails and their pointed hats, they looked like a troupe of women garbed for a pantomime.

After them came the judge, a very solemn-looking mandarin, beautifully robed in a purple dalmatic, which made him look like a bishop. He was seated under a green umbrella, and followed by his pipe-bearers and guards, whose square-cut tunics bore, in scarlet hieroglyphics, the name and titles of their lord.

Red, blue, and yellow flags were flying, and gongs were sending into the air deep notes, the repetition of which nearly drove one

mad. Pleasing, though monotonous, the tender green of budding rice fields stretched away to the horizon on either side of the level road.

Every now and then we passed women, armed with plaited cane bow-nets, dabbling in the fish-laden slime. They were immersed right up to their necks, but on hearing the terrible trumpet they emerged, covered from head to foot with a coating of golden mud. Observing complete silence, they ran towards the prisoner and devoured him with their gaze, betraying their curiosity by pressing around him. One woman, indeed, so hampered his movements that he was unable to proceed. Placing his hands on his breast he bowed, and the woman returned his salute. Then he said politely :

"Pardon the meanest, most venerable lady."

Ti-Soi's act was wholly unaffected; he was merely behaving as he had been taught to do when he was a little boy.

The procession drew up by the empty grave.

While the yoke—resembling two rungs of a ladder with side supports—remained

around his neck, Ti-Soi's head could not be removed. The executioner therefore set about cutting through one of the rungs by means of a long dagger, which he sharpened against his sword as a carver sharpens one knife against another; and as the wood was extremely hard the progress was slow.

Barnavaux had been silently smoking a cigarette, but seeing that I had become pale he asked:

"Would you like to go away? It's a rotten job, isn't it?"

At that moment, however, the face of Ti-Soi lit up; he was watching a young woman coming towards him. Around her neck she had two chains of beads, one of amber, the other of silver; and her blue tunic, which was brand new, looked as though she were going to a wedding. The Chinese have so fragile an appearance that the men remind one of women, and the women of little children.

This woman prostrated herself five times before the condemned man, her face unmoved. Possibly many feelings were agitating her breast, but the only one that showed itself at that moment was the feeling of respect. It was plain to see that this act of hers was

part of a ritual. Ti-Soi, on the contrary, smiled, and put his hand upon her drooping head.

Barnavaux whistled.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"This is no ordinary affair," muttered Barnavaux between his teeth. "No, it's certainly something unusual. That woman is Ti-Hai, his *congaye*, his wife, and it was she who denounced him to the police."

"Then she gets the 1000 piastres reward?" I said, staggered at the idea.

"Yes," answered Barnavaux.

The executioner was still hacking at the yoke and Ti-Soi was helping him. I mean that he was doing his best not to hinder, because he was naturally anxious lest the dagger should hurt him.

Perhaps you have never witnessed in France the shrinking submission of a man, about to be guillotined, when they cut away his shirt collar; if you had you would understand why I make such a point of Ti-Soi's behaviour. Near at hand the executioner's servant was driving a stake into the ground. Later on I saw the meaning of that stake.

"This is one of the things that beats

me utterly," said Barnavaux. "The hussy has given up her man for 1000 piastres—that is about 2500 francs—and here she is, bowing and scraping, dressed in a brand new *kekouan*, and decked out with beads, for all of which he will pay with a sabre cut on the neck; while, as for him, he seems delighted, and, looking at her, forgets that he is about to die." Giving up the problem as quite beyond him, he added. "Only savages could behave like that."

Then Hiep, an old *linh-co*—that is a militiaman, and a man who understood French, because he had enlisted twice over—ventured to ask disapprovingly:

"What you know about it? Ti-Soi *congaye* much *tot*."

With his grey pigtail rolled up and tucked beneath his helmet, and with his wrinkled face, he looked at the best of times like an old woman; now as he spoke his face assumed the expression of a devotee who had heard the name of God profaned on her way from Mass; in fact, he looked scandalised.

"What's that he says?" I asked Barnavaux.

"He says, *parbleu!*" explained Bar-

navaux with disgust, "that I'm mistaken, and that Ti-Soi's *congaye* is all right; that the other folk think so. Bah! they don't treat her like a *nha-quoué*—a peasant—now, but as some great lady. Look!"

It was true: on all sides she was surrounded with the utmost deference.

"That's just because she's rich," said Barnavaux. "She has 1000 piastres now! The rotten people!"

Old Hiep broke in here.

"You not know anything," he said, "not any white folk know. Ti-Soi *congaye* very *tot* all same Madame Buddha"—he meant to say she was like a goddess—"Pirate," he added, "once great thing in Tonkin, make very rich; get *sapeques*, get piastres: peasants give rice, fish, candle, and tea and paraffin. Mandarins give cartridge and cake. Now poor thing, no make rich. Bad, very bad!"

"I know all about that," retorted Barnavaux proudly. "Larchant's troops settled that."

He was referring to the military operations directed against the pirates during the last year.

"Larsant's troops," Hiep answered,

"they help, yes, they help, but no able to do alone; no same. Resident's new roads, no same missionaries, but all help, and all together, too big for Ti-Soi, and he find himself done."

His meaning slowly dawned upon me: the soldiers had dogged the smuggler, the roads of the Resident had enabled them to get from place to place rapidly, and to hem him in. The missionaries also had contributed their share towards his downfall, gleaning from their flock with patient discretion all the information that they could, and suggesting that as Ti-Soi was no longer powerful it was useless to assist him.

"So, to Ti-Soi," continued Hiep, "things went bad and he find nobody help him, nobody give food, no place to hide, no cartridge; have nothing. His stomach like empty drum; legs and arms have no meat, like skeleton. Up in trees they put large writings: 'Catch Ti-Soi, get 1000 piastres.' 'Who get those piastres,' think Ti-Soi, 'who get them? Perhaps Nguyen-Tich, Huong-Tri-Phu, Luong-Tam-Ky? All bad, very bad, all rotten men, enemies of Ti-Soi.'

"Then one evening Ti-Soi he go see his wife, Ti-Hai. She very sad but glad he come and make big bow, and Ti-Soi say. 'I finish as pirate, who get 1000 piastres? Nguyen-Tich, Huong-Tri-Phu, Luong-Tam-Ky, all devils, all bad, very bad. Where the boy?'

"Ti-Soi's boy he lay on the mat asleep, very leetel, no walk yet, but talk leetel. Ti-Soi look at his boy, and say to the woman, 'You get 1000 piastres, it make plenty money for ancestors' altar.' Ti-Hai she bow again, she cry, but say, 'I do what you say.'"

Barnavaux was somewhat softened at this stage of the story and ejaculated:

"Now you see what it is; they have made a compact, these two."

I let it pass; it was too great, too much for mere words. And Ti-Soi had done it, not for his wife, nor for his child, but for the good of his own soul, that it might find rest more easily, in the tablets of a beautiful altar, enshrined in a magnificent house.

At last the yoke was cut through; and Ti-Soi, with his hands tied behind him, was bound at the waist to the stake. His pig-tail was unrolled, he stretched out his neck, and the executioner, balancing himself upon

his shapely legs, gripped the sword in both hands.

Swish!

The body of Ti-Soi remained upright against the stake; and for an instant from the severed arteries two red jets spurted high into the clear air.

DEPARTURE

MY free life, my life of travel and adventure, was drawing to a close. Leaving behind me the province where I had sojourned so long, I was crossing Annam on my way to Tourane where I was to embark. It was at the time when the wretched natives, rather than continue an existence rendered unbearable by the heavy taxation, had allowed themselves to be massacred by thousands.

The roads were unsafe, and all convoys were, by order of the Government, under the escort of the military. Barnavaux, though indifferent to all these political questions, nevertheless rejoiced greatly, because it permitted him to accompany me as far as the coast.

I took advantage of the route that led me past Hué to revisit the tombs of the emperors of Annam. The enormous sepulchres of Gia-Long, Minh-Mang, and Tu-Duc had all been designed with the purpose of realising

the dreams of the idealists of those days —the establishment of new Elysian Fields on earth.

In a sacred, solitary spot, carefully selected after much search by wise men learned in the rites, two huge pine woods have been planted on either side of the pile, pine trees being selected because their foliage is so majestic; it rustles constantly, swayed by every passing wind that blows. Between these two forests of living pillars rise the funeral palaces, leaning against the rocky hill on which they are built.

The sepulchre of Minh-Mang most particularly realises the sacred and majestic scheme in all its severity. Terrace after terrace, flight after flight of steps lead us to a bronze archway, through which we gain access to three porticoes, topped by red-lacquered roofs. On the central, the royal portico, is seen a five-clawed dragon, surrounded by a pale-golden light.

Next we come to the king's house, his earthly domicile, where his shade seeks rest. A huge tiled court follows this abode, and on each side, carved in stone, stand the horses, the war elephant, and the ministers, the wise old men of Komat,

who serve to all eternity the lord of the Empire.

At the summit of a kind of pyramid, surrounded by pylons, rises a great black marble stele, magnificently engraved.

We are standing in the throne room, and the stele represents the king governing his people. Further on, beyond the round ponds filled with black water, past the recurring archways of bronze, past the stairways, a wall appears, a straight, bare, awe-inspiring wall, containing but a single door. We may go no further. The door is barred with iron, and sealed. On mounting a height dominating this sacred retreat, we see that it contains nothing save two little chapels joined together, and bare of all ornament. There the spirit sleeps by the side of his first wife.

The coffin itself is not here. It has been hidden, for fear of desecration, in a mysterious spot not far from these lying tombs, a spot known only to one priest, who is charged to transmit the secret to one other at his death. We should have to turn aside a river's course, remove a mountain, change a whole province into precipices, before we could hope to dis-

cover this puny, useless thing—these few bones.

Barnavaux was with me; he couldn't understand my interest, and did nothing but shrug his shoulders.

You see there is nothing so dangerous as the wrath of a dead man, especially if that dead man has been a powerful king. There are still a thousand million folk to think that way: Confucius has grafted himself to the polished stone indeed.

It is so hard for a child, or the uncivilised, to conceive of the actual disappearance of the wonders that they see daily. It may be the same with animals. One day I was cruel enough to kill a cat that was filling my garden with his cries. For two days and nights his mate watched over him, timidly touching him with her paws and amorous body. She did not understand what had happened.

Primitive man cannot understand either. What! here is a man who yesterday was walking, talking, loving, who had passions, virtues and vices, the knowledge of good and evil. And to-day he lies motionless. He can never move again!

To believe that would be to set aside all

one's preconceived notions of him; so, somehow or other, one must imagine that he lives, walks and acts, one must practically make a material shade of him. And it is surely logical to suppose that he will look much as his living counterpart did during the last stages of his life, whether he was a sick man, an old man, or a soldier killed in battle. It is quite possible, too, that he is ailing, unhappy, irritable or angry. His anger is much more to be feared than his paternal and royal indulgence to be desired.

This phantom, who is a composite of life and death, delights in the respect of his people, and he loves the things that were his while he lived; but he also loves rest and silence, still waters and the fresh countryside filled with trees and breezes. He delights in all that satisfies his pride, but he craves for quiet; he is weary of turmoil; he is as he was at the time of his death.

All this explains why, on the demise of a king of Annam, they build him a city containing a residence for himself, and a pavilion for his baths, where he can come to see his women swimming.

His wives are, in truth, sent there at his death. In the fullness of life they are taken

to this dead city, to this sumptuous, silent, ghastly city. Minh-Mang's wives are there now, those, that is to say, who were the youngest at his death, and have not yet died. They have turned into spectres awaiting their ghostly husband. His bed is always ready, his food prepared, and his garments and betel jar kept in good order. It is for this that they remain there, the humble, yet sublime servants of an immortal love; a love that even during the lifetime of their husband received but a miserable reward.

Suddenly Barnavaux remarked:

"It's quite right, quite right! All as it ought to be!"

"What's right, Barnavaux?"

"It's right for these women to be here. The races whose women are like these are the races that last. We shall pass away because—because we've forgotten the things we ought to have remembered. They'll have their revenge if they wait, that's certain."

. . . . . .

Three days later, the railway then in building being out of the question, our convoy starts for Tourane by the Col des Nuées.

In the evening the mountains towards which you are journeying appear as though draped in a veil of green and pink China silk, flecked with white. The dunes look wan in the gloaming, and the sea of Tourane has such a weird, ink-like appearance that its smooth surface seems to slope downwards to the horizon.

We cross water-courses, ascend and descend endless zigzag paths in the granite-bouldered mountains, and for hours at a stretch we keep alongside the same creek of the same bay, making no apparent progress, but going round in circles like a pigeon on the point of alighting.

The clouds lengthen and seem to cling to every mountain-peak and tree-top, and then condense into cascades of falling water. When we reach the neck of the mountain we still have the sea at our feet, the wild sea of Annam that rages so furiously, that, even at the height at which we stand, we can still hear dashing itself against the cliffs and groaning, as it furthers the inroads of erosion.

On all sides one sees the same fine trees, lithe, sombre, and straight; or clusters of banyan trees, hairy and warped, throwing

in all directions their root-taking branches like the scaffolds of an unfinished house; branches that wind in and out of one another, like the warp and weft of a cloth.

Then we come to more water-courses and lagoons, and to stretches of sand into which the men sink.

Notwithstanding all this, we are travelling on the high road, along the road formerly used by the mandarins, and to-day by servants of the State.

The natives of the countryside have been accustomed, from time immemorial, to act as beasts of burden, carrying trunks and chests and bearing sedan-chairs containing white or coloured dignitaries. As time goes on their task grows harder, and the travellers from Europe more numerous and exacting—more brutal even. I have actually seen some brandishing revolvers. Consequently the coolies are fast disappearing, taking to flight rather than submit to violence.

My regret at leaving the country diminished. I did not like to think that I, too, had my share of responsibility in the matter, and it hurt me to see such things allowed.

"Barnavaux" I said, "you'll return to France some day, won't you?"

"To France?" he repeated, as though astonished. "Why, I couldn't live there now." He aimed a kick at one of the porters who was lagging a little. "I mean a country where there are only white people," he explained. "You can never get anything done properly for you."

Then it was I realised that he no longer understood the customs of the men and women of France, and that he despised their humble way of living, because under alien skies he had tasted of power.

PART II

QUININE

TIME went on. I was back in France again, and my experience of the other side of the world had become but a memory. It is a painful process upon which one does not like to dwell, this searching into one's past, to find but ashes!

I still hoped, however, to see Barnavaux again; I knew that he would be certain to return on leave from time to time, after the manner of soldiers, until a day when, under a foreign sky, death claimed him, or until he became *adjudant de garde civile*, a post much coveted by old soldiers who do not wish to end their days in their own country.

On his part, no hypothesis ever entered his head other than these two; either of which seemed a natural and, all things considered, a desirable end.

He returned, however, sooner than expected. One morning I found among my letters a note from Barnavaux that didn't

bear a colonial stamp. It appeared that he had been attached to the garrison at Paris and had been sent on to the Val-de-Grâce with malaria and tropical anæmia. He acquainted me with all this in his own handwriting, which was quite neat and painstaking, and in the spelling peculiarly his own, which wilfully changed all the past participles into infinitives. "C'est pour avoir le plaiser de votre visite," he wrote, straight to the point, and he knew well enough that I should come!

I went immediately to the Val-de-Grâce, and found Barnavaux, not in bed, but muffled up in the awful grey overcoat of the invalided soldier, sitting upon a bench in the old garden, and with the unlovely cotton cap upon his head. Why do they compel patients, already depressed by failing strength and, maybe, by the fear of approaching death, to wear those dismal and degrading uniforms? Surely it's a mistake on the part of the doctors, and an outrage on humanity.

Other unhappy mortals, dressed like himself, passed to and fro in front of Barnavaux, but he took no notice of them; and, though he was sitting right in the sunshine, I could

see that he reproached the sun for not giving more warmth and light. He was shivering, but he smiled bravely and offered me his hand.

Have you ever experienced a sensation of pain upon clasping a thin white hand that was formerly so brown and strong and soiled with work? Doubtless, women go more readily to the sick, prompted by the generous impulse of their maternal hearts. But we men fear the sick as we fear savages; we are afraid as we should be afraid before beings that do not resemble us, and to whom we were unable to speak. Barnavaux, however, said calmly:

"I can understand. I strike you as devilish old; fever always has that effect."

It was quite true; he did seem to have shrivelled up, and that made him look so old. He drew from his pocket one of those little mirrors that bootmakers, for reasons best known to themselves, distribute among their customers. Old soldiers resemble tramps in one respect: they always carry about a comb, a looking-glass and a knife with them.

"The drollest part of the business," he said, "is that one resembles the natives

of the district where one develops the fever. Don't I look just like a Chinaman now ? "

He was quite right, his pinched, yellow-grey countenance sadly recalled the faces of the people of the Far East, and he seemed to grimace as they did. The pupils of his eyes had become very enlarged, giving him the appearance of drink or madness; but he chuckled through his chattering teeth :

" 'Tis no good to grumble. It's only a shivering fit, and must take its course. Quinine's the thing for it."

He got up as best he could. I helped him ; in fact, had he been my own son I could not have tended him more carefully, and so he regained his bed, on the first floor.

" Blankets," he cried, " plenty of blankets."

Over his legs, with their shaking knees, we threw three or four of the coarse brown regulation blankets, awful, heavy things; and the attendant gave him an injection of quinine.

" That's better than the tabloids," said Barnavaux, with the air of one who knows. " That'll stop the shivering right enough. Leave me for a while ; I'm no good to anyone and sick of myself."

I pretended to obey him, but returned towards evening, and found the attendant in the middle of changing his soaked sheets.

"I'm all right again," he said, "I've sweated, and it's all over till next time."

Like all old fever victims, he could tell beforehand, and almost exactly, the time and duration of these attacks; and, as he had said a little while since, it was no good to worry. The only thing he complained of was that the major refused to give a good dose of ipecacuanha; that is a sovereign remedy, according to him, and, as a matter of fact, formerly it was largely used. Barnavaux is not a youngster, you see, and he clings to the old methods. Still, he deigned to approve of the quinine.

"It is damned good drug," he said. "What should we do without it? We should be like they were at Réunion, the first time the fever came."

He could see that I didn't know what had happened at Réunion, and his eyes, with their huge pupils, filled with pride, as they always do when he's got something new to tell me.

"Yes," he continued, "I was told this

at Tamatave, ages ago, when I went there first, under Gallieni. The story takes you back a long way. Up to that time, perhaps before the war of 1870 even, there had never been any fever in Réunion; no one even knew what it was, except two fellows who had been over to Madagascar and contracted it there, and they got rid of it as soon as they returned. Well, one day, after a cyclone, the fever came—that's the tale the blacks and half-castes and Tamil emigrants from India tell you, at any rate. The doctors and the wiseacres wouldn't believe this at first, but now that they know mosquitoes carry the infection, perhaps they've altered their opinion on the subject.

"How long should you think it takes those infernal winds to carry the fever-laden flies from Madagascar to the islands around? Less than a day, doesn't it? They are gathered up with the dust, with the feathers of birds and the seeds of plants, and whirled away into the air. Sometimes, tired with the long journey, they come to a stop over the islands of Mauritius and Bourbon. They don't travel in an altogether haphazard manner either; they know when and where to drop. After the storm has

raged over land and sea, smashing in the roofs of houses with the boats thrown up by the fury of the sea, when the raging winds carry them over dry land, they let themselves go, and know when to close their wings and drop to earth, and to play their part in the game of Destiny.

"The people commenced to die by hundreds, little children especially. Fever doesn't kill grown men and women to begin with, it deals gently with them—as with me—you understand; it devours them piecemeal, and in the end something else actually finishes them off. Don't say no—don't! It'll be my fate some day, and what does it matter? I've lived my life; I've known men well, and women better; I've seen the world, and learned many things. But why should children, babies, die like that? It's wrong, horrible, unjust, isn't it? Tell me now, isn't it?"

He had crooked his thin arm into mine, and I could feel that he was quite beside himself. That didn't alarm me, for I too have experienced these attacks. It's not exactly delirium, but it has the same effect on a man as the drinking of too much absinth on a very hot day.

"The beastly flies were killing the children wholesale," went on Barnavaux, "and the chemists were making fortunes. Just think! There was, of course, no great supply of quinine in a country like Réunion, where fever was unknown. They kept a little, of course, for—well, for anything. How much, for instance, do you think could be found to-day in a nice clean little town of the Alps or Pyrenees? And, if anything did happen in twenty-four hours, they could get what was needed, while over there at the time of which I am speaking it took a month and more to get a fresh supply, so the price of quinine went steadily up.

"The chemists congratulated themselves; one of them especially did an enormous business, and the only thing that worried him was that he had a baby son, his only child, not yet ten months old. He did the same as all other rich people did, and sent him with his mother and the ayah to the hills, beyond reach of the fever. That eased his mind of some anxiety, and he returned again to the sale of his goods. When a customer came to him and said, 'My little boy,' or 'my little girl is very ill,' he gloated over the fact that he had been wise in time, and that

later on his child would be among the great of the land, a man whose father had been rich enough to send him to France to study.

"There was just one thing, however, that he had overlooked. These black nurses are all the same—they must have a lover. This one pretended she went out for the sake of the child, but instead of that she went down to the valley to meet her black lover, her *bounioul.* So the baby took the fever like the rest. Sometimes misfortune dogs one's steps!

"The mother sent for the doctor, who said, 'It's most extraordinary; he ought never to have taken it! He must have contracted the disease before you came up here, but we will give him quinine, and that will soon put him to rights.'

"The mother thought it was not worth while alarming her husband, as the doctor had said the child would soon be well again, and she sent a black, a stranger, to the chemist for the medicine. Moreover, the father only received the best of news. They went on telling him lies, and he went on piling up money and thinking how happy his son would be when he became a man.

"All this time the doctor was visiting the baby daily, and saying, 'Things are going wrong; he's not a bit better! He ought to be throwing it off by now; I must double his doses.' He doubled the doses, and in spite of that, each day the ague racked the child.

"You have seen little ones waste away! Isn't it heart-rending? At forty years of age I look an old man, because the fever has so ravaged me, and I can see that you're alarmed. Don't mind saying so, it doesn't matter! But children! poor little boneless morsels of humanity! When they start losing flesh they look like caricatures of old, old men. They look ugly too, and that is unfair; it's a punishment they don't deserve. They've done nothing to bring that on themselves.

"The baby was sick constantly, and he had convulsions. I think children have convulsions because they have a much stronger hold on life than we think. All the life they ought yet to live is stirring in their little bodies, a long, long life that struggles and cries, 'You have no right to turn me out!' Then the doctor realised that he must prepare them for the worst. 'You'd

better send for his father,' he said, 'it will be wiser.' In his mind he was thinking, 'If he comes very quickly, he may yet see his son alive!'

"The father came. They had not said much to make him over-anxious. His wife had written, 'Baby is not very well; I should feel more comfortable if you would come and see him, but probably by the time you get here he will be right again.' He reached the hills without hurrying overmuch, and was met by the doctor who said the usual things. He must be resigned; he must not give way to grief and make things harder for his wife! 'What the devil are you talking about!' he answered, 'He's not dead!'

"The doctor bent his head, and led the way to the house under the veranda. The baby was lying there in his little cot, nothing but a shadow of his former self. His flesh seemed to have melted during the eight days of fever. 'How did it happen? It's impossible!' cried his father. The doctor had no explanation to offer. 'I never anticipated anything of the kind,' he said; 'the quinine was absolutely useless, and towards the end I was giving

him 25 grains a day!' The chemist's eyes grew wide with horror. 'Did you buy the quinine from me?' he gasped. 'Naturally,' replied the doctor, 'and I prescribed doses that I've never before known necessary for a child.'

"The chemist gave a dreadful cry. 'Doctor! doctor! It is I who have killed him!' He fell into a terrible fit of laughter and went stark mad, and I don't know whether he ever got sane again! Of course you understand," said Barnavaux in a hushed voice, "he hadn't any quinine; it was all gone, so he had put just anything into his tabloids in order to make money."

"Barnavaux," I said, "Barnavaux?"

"Yes, what?" he said, shivering.

"What makes you talk about children like that?"

"Why, what do you mean? I suppose everyone talks like that. It's only natural —it's—what are you asking for?"

"Oh, nothing! How old are you?"

"Forty. You ought to know!"

I whistled, and began to speak of other things. Suppose he too had come to that terrible crisis in the life of a man when, no longer quite young, he hankers after a

wife and children—children to continue and live after him. Barnavaux of all men! He would surely be the last to succumb! No doubt I was letting my imagination run away with me.

ON MARCH

WHEN Barnavaux was dismissed from the Val-de-Grâce to return to the Nouvelle-France barracks, there was nothing in his demeanour to suggest that he had in any way altered. To all appearance he was just a soldier, who placed at the service of his country his marching legs and knapsack-laden back, and offered his breast as a target for the enemy's bullets, in return for the right to eat and to sleep under a roof or a tent, and to be free of all responsibility; not even to be held responsible for himself.

His impartial view of things, and the domineering manner in which he dealt with them—not that he did so from any exalted height, 'tis true—were both personal characteristics, but they were very closely connected with his calling also.

He had plenty of time at his disposal! He was most certainly a born soldier, one of that fast-vanishing type, on the subject

of whom, by the way, I imagined I knew all that was worth knowing. Once again, however, Barnavaux set me right.

It was a Sunday morning, and I had come early to the barracks to invite him out to *déjeuner*. As we stood there, one of those vans that bear on their dark-brown body the alarming inscription "Ministère de l'Intérieur. Service des Prisons," entered the courtyard. It was one of those long, rectangular, box-like vehicles, devoid of all air and light, save that which filtered through narrow shutters; and a grating over the doorway revealed a glimpse of the stern profile of some *gendarme* or *garde* of Paris.

The van had a most sinister appearance! The mere thought that it held human beings, to whom fresh air is as necessary as it is to any of God's creatures, gave one an instinctive feeling of pity and loathing.

You picture to yourself the mystery it contains: a criminal or perhaps an innocent man accused of some crime; certainly distress in some shape is there. But that is not the only thing. These prison-vans are so hideous. They bear such an awful resemblance to funeral hearses carrying the

dead to their last resting-place. Surely they are permeated with the odour of death and their occupants must already resemble the occupants of the hearses.

The man in charge of the van produced his keys, unlocked the door, drew the bolt, and a private of the Colonial Infantry staggered out. His face was so awfully abject and desperate that even Barnavaux—and he's as hard as nails, and knows as well as anyone else what havoc can be wrought in a drunken frenzy, and the depression that follows on debauch—was dumfounded for the moment; then he whistled softly.

"He's caught a skinful!" he said.

The soldier was shaking from head to foot like a dying beast. The ash-grey colour of his naturally pale face was increased by the poisons that were still in his system, a stale drunkenness, as it were, rancid and unwholesome, and he was grimed with dust and sweat.

"He's dead drunk," I ventured.

"Not he," answered Barnavaux, suddenly interested; "he's not drunk now, but he has been, and he caught a chill when drunk."

I didn't grasp his meaning, and he went on:

"Look at his coat and trousers; they're wringing wet! He's wet through, poor devil, and that works havoc when one's drunk."

The *garde* held out his warrant.

"Attempt at suicide," he said. "They fished him out of the water at the Quai de la Mégisserie, and the infirmary people sent him on here."

"Good!" ejaculated Barnavaux. "I've got it now. That makes the eighth in a fortnight! It's a queer kind of epidemic, isn't it?"

"What will they do to him?" I asked.

"Twenty-four hours' hospital, if he doesn't get congestion of the lungs, and then thirty days' cells, that's the penalty. It won't stop him from having another shot, either: it's always the same fellows that do it over and over again."

"A love affair?" I queried.

"A love affair!" snorted Barnavaux indignantly. "Not likely! Fellows like him are too much in earnest. It's the Government's fault; the poor devils! They don't care a damn what happens."

"That's an excellent reason for committing suicide; but I fail to see what the Government has got to do with it."

"Oh, do you!" cried Barnavaux. "Well, the Government won't send the Colonial Infantry out to the Colonies nowadays: 'The blood of Frenchmen should not be spilt in foreign countries,' that's what the papers say. But what the devil do these fellows join the regiment for? Why did I join? Why, to see the world a bit, and be on the march. Ordinary people, like you, for instance, don't join the Colonial Infantry, as a rule. It's people like—like advertisement-men for instance—"

He could see I hadn't the vaguest idea what he was driving at, and grew impatient because he could not find words to express his meaning.

"Yes," he repeated, "advertisement-men, or sandwich-men if you like, those who earn forty sous a day by walking up and down between two advertisement-boards. Some of them do it for money, but not all of them; it's a vocation with some of them, or a disease, I don't know which; they've just got to be on the march.

"It's the same with tramps; they travel all over the world, like the wandering Jew, and when they can't do it any longer, or when they are forcibly kept from it, some-

thing seems to go snap in their heart or their brain; they have a longing to be violently sick or to die. There are a lot more of these fellows in Paris and other big towns than anybody would think, and enlisting seems such a pleasant, easy way out of the difficulty, specially now that religion is no longer taught in the schools, and you can't go out as a missionary or a lay brother.

"You are starving? they give you food. You have nowhere to sleep? your country supplies you with a better bed than the charities, and without the compulsory bath, moreover; you needn't wash unless you want to. You don't know what to do with yourself and haven't an idea you can call your own? The officers think for you: Right march! Left march! Nothing but gestures as though you were in church.

"Then when they are on march, the *marsouins* have the wide countries of the colonies for their own. The difficulty is that when they have everything provided for them, and no thought to give to food, clothing or lodging, they must be off at once, otherwise it turns their brain.

"The fellow you saw just now, and the

seven others who attempted suicide, joined just a year ago, because they firmly believed they would be sent to Morocco, and instead of that they were kept here like sheep. That sort of thing demoralises them and makes them try to do away with themselves."

Pondering a moment, he said:

"It is such a long time ago now that I hardly remember, but this business reminds me of the three *zéphyrs*[1] that I saw court-martialled fifteen years ago. No one believed their story, and neither did I, for I didn't know what I have learned since; I was a greenhorn!

"Their names were Bargouille, Coldru, and Malterre, but Bargouille was the chief offender. He had strangled his comrade Bonvin, who, together with him and the other two, had been imprisoned in the same pit at the camp of Aïn-Souf. In those days, prisoners were still shut away in these pits, a kind of big hole, narrow at the top, and wide at the bottom, where the natives conceal their grain. It's been forbidden since.

"Malterre and Coldru were looked upon

[1] Soldiers sent to the *compagnies de discipline* in Algeria.

as accomplices. They swore they had only been witnesses, and yet that they had nothing to say except that they had seen Bargouille strangle Bonvin. When asked why he did it, they only shrugged their shoulders. 'Suppose they didn't like each other,' was all they would say.

"I was on picket duty at the court, and now I think of it, I can distinctly see their brown overcoats, on which there wasn't a single button. I didn't know why, then, neither did anyone else. They seemed dazed, but behaved quite correctly. They didn't argue, and answered the questions very politely, but it struck me that inwardly they were perfectly contented, and didn't care what was done to them.

"Bargouille kept on saying, 'Yes, it was I who killed Bonvin and I'm sorry for it in a way. Malterre and Coldru only looked on; you can't prosecute them. That's all I have to say.'

"The captain, who was acting as magistrate, suggested a reason why Bargouille had killed Bonvin. There are always some little episodes of the kind in the life of a *zéphyr* and it's not their fault either. Think of it! A lot of men, young men,

who have to live their long weary years of punishment alone together, men who have forgotten the innocence they possessed long before they were sent to penal servitude abroad, where they have to mix with all the thieves, murderers, and rogues these regiments contain. The captain's suggestion was not so very far-fetched after all.

"What difference could it make if Bargouille confessed to that or to anything else? He had to die anyway. But the approach of death seems to put strange, unlooked-for ideas into people's heads. He suddenly began to roar, 'That's a lie, a dirty lie! You can shoot me, I don't care! I give in; it's all over and done with, but I won't let you say that. No one shall say that of me to my—my people!' I knew he had been going to say 'no one shall say that of me to my mother.' His parents were butchers in the quartier Mouffetard, but he had his own ideas of decency, and, besides, there are certain words that dare not be spoken, for to do so would be to lose one's sang-froid.

"Then Malterre spoke, 'It isn't fair,' he said; 'we had sworn we wouldn't speak, but that's too much of a good thing. Never

mind, Bargouille, you speak up and tell them what you like. It'll be worse for us; but we don't mind. Say, Coldru, he may speak, mayn't he?' Coldru was less enthusiastic, for he feared the consequences, but he answered, 'It can't be helped if two of you wish it; you're in the majority!'

"Bargouille thought a moment or two, then he said, 'I can't tell you myself. I don't know how to. You tell them, Malterre; you are bolder and better educated than me.' 'Well,' began Malterre, 'it was like this. We had been down the hole a fortnight. There was a tub, a jug, we four fellows and bread enough for three and a quarter. The first few days we did our best to sing and joke, and we played pitch-and-toss with the buttons of our uniforms.'

"Later on," said Barnavaux, "I learned why they were reduced to that. The men were searched, of course, before being sent down, and any packs of cards they had on them were confiscated. That didn't stop them! They turned into children again and played 'odd or even' with the buttons of their uniforms. That's why the poor devils hadn't a button on their coats. Malterre continued. 'It wasn't easy to play

because we were in irons, but we managed to all the same, even if we did hurt ourselves in doing so. At the same time, I would like to point out to Messieurs les officiers'—he said this with much elegance—' that with reference to the thing of which Bargouille is accused, it would have been very difficult under the circumstances.

" ' Bonvin was the first to begin growsing. He slept all the time instead of playing, and when he wasn't asleep he was complaining of fever. Fever! Everybody has it! It's like hunger, a natural and regular occurrence, it comes and goes and no one cares a damn. But Bonvin wept about it, and that proved there was something else the matter with him. We were all beginning to feel it too, in irons as we were, and sick of doing nothing. At least Bonvin said, " It's too black down here, *nom de Dieu!*"

" ' It wasn't exactly black because the pit was open at the top, but the light was very dull, perhaps because of the smell, for sight and smell seem to get mixed up sometimes, but it most likely looked so dull because of the sky we could see through the hole at the top. It was as bright when we looked up there as if we had flown on wings right into

the middle of the light. Then, when we looked at our feet, everything was of course blacker than ever.

"'Then Coldru chimed in, "You're right," he said, "I feel a bit anxious." "About your future?" asked Bargouille grinning. "No," said Coldru, "about my legs."

"'That's not to be wondered at when your legs are in irons! As soon as he had spoken, each one of us felt the same, and not only in his buttocks and knees, but all over. You might not think it possible to feel the pain of your legs in your head, but we did! "It's cool in here," I said, "Cooler than it is out of doors, where the sun is blazing down on the pebbles crackling in the heat!"

"'Then we all began to think about the sun. We pictured it as a great fiery wheel behind which we were running. Then we saw what is an everyday sight in southern countries: the track winding in and out among the dunes; a date tree that had been planted there as a landmark—that's what the officers say—standing all alone in the middle of the plain, camels feeding on the blue grass, turning it over and over with

their hard, slimy tongues, with now and again a lousy Bicot, sitting sideways on his mule, and thumping it with his two feet like an old woman working a sewing machine. But the thought that was always in our mind's eye was the gold and red of the evening sky, as we marched along, left, right, left, right, in our hobnailed boots. We saw the high road, I tell you, the great free road, and all the joy of it—we saw the only thing worth living for!

"'Coldru asked, "When do we get out of here?" "When we do get out, we shall only start breaking stones again. That's no good!" answered Bonvin. We all thought the same as Bonvin, but for the sake of saying something, I remarked, "To hell with *la classe*."[1] "We've done with all that," said Bonvin. "We are sentenced to penal servitude. Don't play the giddy ox." "Very well then," said Bonvin, "I'm blowed if I stand this any longer. I'll be court-martialled." "What good's that?" I asked.

"'As I said the words, the beauty of the idea flashed upon all of us! If we were

[1] Military contingent comprising all the conscripts of the same year.

court-martialled we should get out of the hole! "How far should we have to go to be tried?" asked Bargouille. "To Sfax," answered Bonvin, "180 kilometres away! Nine days' march!" That would give us nine days' march along the high road. Ah! it was music in my ears, and I hugged the thought to myself. No one said another word that day, but we watched each other.

"'At last one of us, I don't know who, said, "One of us has got to be done in, then the others will be court-martialled!" So we tossed to see who'd have to be killed. It didn't take long, and Bonvin lost. All he said was, "I never did have any luck; it was always me that had to pay for drinks round!" Then he closed his eyes while we tossed again to see who had to do the job. Bargouille lost. "Don't bear me a grudge old man; I've got to do it!" he said to Bonvin.

"'Bonvin didn't open his eyes again; he wouldn't. He submitted without a struggle; and, as for Coldru and me, I swear we never budged, did we, Bargouille?' "No," answered Bargouille, spitting on the ground. "I've told you I did it. Well, it's true. That's all I've got to say!"'"

Barnavaux had finished his story.

"What happened to Bargouille?" I asked.

"They shot him, of course," answered Barnavaux, "and the others got ten years. They knew what to expect, and didn't care a damn, because they'd been on the march again—nine days in the sunshine. They knew the price they'd have to pay, and didn't complain."

"So all you old soldiers stay on in the Colonial Infantry simply for the sake of trudging the roads?" I asked.

"Every one of us, more or less!" he assured me.

. . . . . .

I walked back with him in the evening by way of the Faubourg Poissonière.

"Will you be free on Thursday night?" I asked.

"On leave until midnight, but don't come here for me. Go to Rue Gourié at Plaisance."

"It's a pub, I suppose?"

"A pub! No. It's a Université Populaire. It disturbs the chiefs when they hear we go there, because they imagine we shall find people to speak up for us, and protect

our rights, so they take care not to give us a bad time in barracks. That's a dodge I learned years ago, at Toulon, and they know a thing or two at Toulon, I can tell you!"

"Will there be ladies there?" I inquired.

"Oh, I suppose so," answered Barnavaux, "there always are."

He changed the subject, however, and that gave me food for thought. Formerly he would have finished his remark, or said that it was no good reckoning without women; there were always plenty of them to be had for the asking.

THE ODYSSEY

ABOUT ten o'clock on the following Thursday evening, I didn't forget to go and meet Barnavaux at the Université Populaire. The lectures are held in a somewhat dilapidated building, at the end of an old garden, in which three or four acacia trees still linger. Their trunks are covered with great cracks, and their foliage is faded and pale. New houses have been erected all around them, and tower high above their poor old heads, that have been maimed and closely clipped by the pruning hook. They still retain a melancholy beauty, however, that comes from their capacity to go on living in spite of it all.

A somewhat sad poverty reigned inside the house, the headquarters of the U.P., as they call it. There is a library full of queer volumes, and a room with a horrible odour, which they call the Laboratory, by virtue of a few stray phials upon a shelf.

There is also a larger room, which, by the erection of a few planks, and the running of a curtain along a pole, can be converted into a theatre hall. A placard announced that M. Ledoux, a professor of the Université, was to deliver his third and last lecture on the *Odyssey*.

All the habitués of the place were there to hear him : small retired tradesmen for the most part, with their wives, all of them timid, but, at the same time, rabidly anti-clerical, absurdly conservative, yet frequenters of the most revolutionary *réunions*. And very puzzling it would all appear but for the reflection that the reason which draws them together is the saving of the two pennyworth of petroleum that would otherwise be burnt at home.

There were those poor old women who attend these meetings just as they go to church, because they feel the need to go where they can listen with restful respect to words that they don't understand ; and there were some handsome young women there with leanings towards anarchy, but virtuous too in their own fashion, which, after all, is a sublime one : it is easier, doubtless, to remain pure and to live alone than

to accept love and motherhood and to work hard for one's living.

There were also a few young men there, who were just beginning to imagine that they were revolutionaries and anti-patriots, boys with the faces of modern Calvinists, sullen, disinterested, eager and hard. Looking over the shoulder of one of them who had remained behind in the library, I saw that he was jotting down a few notes in an old volume of Jomini, which he had picked up at a second-hand stall.

"Yes," he said, looking at me with burning eyes, "I'm an anti-militarist. All the same, we must learn the tricks of the trade, because one of these days we shall have to fight against the middle-classes."

His remark pleased me greatly. The idea that this boy who, while firmly believing himself to be an anti-patriot, and an anti-militarist, in the bottom of his heart dreamt only of the day when he should be a leader of soldiers—a fighter himself, and a conqueror! The main thing is the love of fighting; it is a healthy instinct. It doesn't matter who the enemy may be.

In the meanwhile, the lecturer was talking on, convinced too of his mission to mankind,

YOUNG MEN—WHO WERE JUST BEGINNING TO IMAGINE THAT THEY WERE REVOLUTIONARIES

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and enjoying a haughty pleasure in mixing with the people, showing at the same time that he knew far less of them than the humblest little parish priest of six months' experience, or than any non-commissioned officer after a week's grand manœuvres.

He talked and talked! What he said was exceedingly interesting, and quite incomprehensible. When speaking of the Phaeacians, he described a Mycenaean palace. He explained why Hermes was called "Le Messager tueur d'Argos," and finally he wept when discoursing on the miracle of Greece, which is nothing more or less than that the Greeks created beauty for no apparent reason at all. When he had finished his weeping, which was by way of being his parting shot, he brought his lecture to a close.

Then everybody, except the lecturer and the small tradesmen, went off to a wine shop. That's where the real meetings of the U.P. are held. For my part, I went too.

One of the good-looking girls who had accompanied us was partaking of cherry-brandy. She ventured in a pensive voice;

"He said it was a very beautiful thing, that—*Odyssey*, but none of us know why

it's beautiful; no one can understand it. The other day they read parts of *Paul et Virginie*. There was a shipwreck, and the little girl was drowned! It makes a cold shiver go down my back when I think of it! C'est chic, ça, c'est très chic. But the *Odyssey!* One can't even remember the names in it!"

The young anarchist who had been making notes on the Jomini shrugged his shoulders; he never attended any but the chemistry and science lectures. Poor people must not even dream that such a thing as beauty exists; it's too enervating! All they require is the power to hate and to fight and to appropriate, that's all! But Barnavaux, carefully picking his words, said:

"I think I do understand that thing about Ulysses. It was much too long the way he told it, and it is complicated, because it tells of a voyage, and all kinds of unlooked-for things happen on voyages. You get lost and can't follow the drift of things, but the whole point of the story is as clear as daylight."

"What's as clear as daylight, Barnavaux?" I asked.

"You know better than I do," he

answered, looking rather confused. "Ulysses is a soldier who is longing for his wife, that's all! I know how it happened, because it always does happen that way. He had gone very far away to fight against savages, fellows you've every right to plunder, and every time he put into port, there were the women—who kept him there.

"The first was a very great lady who lived on an island in a magic cave, and who was very rich and beautiful. And at first Ulysses was contented with the love of such a grand lady. She gave him the choicest things to eat, and wine every evening. She had beautiful hair; and she loved him so much that she was furious with those who said to her, 'Send him away; he cannot stay here!'

"What about him? I know how he felt. He slept in her arms, and didn't love her! Yet his country was not nearly so beautiful as the lady's was. Her country was full of clear rivers, meadows, poplar-trees, and fields of violets. Ah, you don't know how one longs for fresh water and trees and the green grass when one is sailing in the middle of the ocean! I've been to Crete, and I know how the sun burns there.

The lady would put her arms round his neck and say, 'I've always given you all you wished for, and you will never find a more beautiful woman than me. Stay with me! Where will you find my equal!'

"But he answered, 'You are too high above me. I have a woman over yonder who will always be my real wife; when I speak, she obeys!' So, in the end, he got away, on a raft, and a raft in the middle of the ocean is anything but safe. He must have known the meaning of fear more than once. When your boat is very small, the waves always look as though they are going to swamp you; you feel as if you were always beneath them, and they grow black and heavy and angry; they make you think of a buffalo's mane just where it is thickest, between the withers and the neck!"

"'The blue locks of Poseidon,'" I murmured.

Barnavaux didn't understand. He looked perplexedly at me, and proceeded:

"So he was wrecked on another island, where he found another woman more beautiful than the last. Ah, I'm sure she must have been his great temptation, and

that's why he never dared tell her so, but always kept the knowledge to himself!

"Just think! He was an old man, almost, and she was quite young, and he had come upon her, naked and playing at ball by the riverside, under the silver-coloured trees. And she had seen him too, in all his strength and vigour, and had known him for a chief, a man whose parents had known how to train him. Only a primitive people are capable of realising decency in the nude. I know that by experience; and Ulysses was a man who understood. So this girl——"

"Nausicaa," I put in.

"Yes, Nausicaa, she knew that he was a chief, a man who realised the fitness of things. Slaves do not know they are naked, because no one takes any notice of them.

"These two most certainly loved one another, and to a strong man the winning of a girl's love is a great victory. He wants to shout the glad tidings aloud; he is exalted, and at the same time ready to weep for joy. He never told her, however, and when she said to him, 'When you return to your country, do not forget me,' his

only reply was, 'I shall think of you as of the Blessed Virgin.'"

By the way, that's not exactly the text. Homer makes his hero say, "As to a goddess, I will address my vows to thee," but Barnavaux saw no difference, he was still seeking the words necessary to complete his story.

"Then he went away. I know what his island was like! The book tells us he said, 'Where night begins, it rises out of the sea.' I know what that means! When I was in the Far East, I always pictured France like that—a country situated beyond the setting sun. When one has travelled much one notices the different features of the earth.

"Ulysses went away to fight the scoundrels who wanted his wife. He faced death for that alone, though he might have lived elsewhere in perfect happiness had he wished. But he couldn't wish it! Whatever he did, wherever he went, he saw that woman only! Because she had been the first to prepare his bed, and kindle the light in his chamber and on his hearth; and because she not only spoke in his tongue, but that all the words she said had the same meaning for her as for him."

Barnavaux drew a deep breath, tired out

with his long speech on such a difficult subject. We each paid our share of the reckoning, even the ladies, for that is one of the rules of the society, and we got up to go. One of the good-looking girls, dressed in a pale pink blouse, touched Barnavaux's neck with her bare arm. He clasped her round the waist, and in a flash I realised that this rough soldier, who had seen so much of men of the world, had only spoken thus because all the time he had had her in his mind. The girl quivered at his touch like some lithe animal, and, as they went along the dark road, Barnavaux made me think of a hungry tiger carrying off his prey.

LOUISE

I WAS often to meet that tall, lithe girl again, with her long limbs and her manlike gaze. Possibly you have noticed that nowadays, in Paris, many of the women of the working-classes have that look in their eyes. It is not the stare of the women who sell themselves when and where they can: not the insolent, wanton, and sometimes hunted expression that they get because of the other women who loathe them, because of the conventions that persecute them, and because of the men to whom they must submit. It is not the look of the woman who has a husband, or more plainly a man of her own, with whom she lives happily or unhappily as the case may be. It differs entirely from these. It is the gaze of a man, frank, free and determined, but it has little of innocence and nothing of submission about it.

New men and new women have arisen

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in France during the last forty years, with other qualities and other faults—as for their virtues and their vices, well, I am afraid they have been much the same from the dawn of humanity—than those of a former generation, now dead, and of ourselves. And we can neither see with these new people nor understand them, we who are now almost their grandfathers, and who are still their guides. It is a state of things fraught with danger.

This girl had chosen Barnavaux, and Barnavaux had chosen her, that is all. The very customs of their class exacted that such things should be quite common, and demanded a quiet acceptance of the fact. People must not show they are amazed at that which has happened to them ; they must not let people know that they have become renewed, rejuvenated, by the most eternally youthful sentiment in the world—by Love the Immortal, old, yet ever new.

Even among the working-class one does not find the simplicity that used to exist; it is out of fashion now. You do not meet the close-clasped couples of former days, sauntering along darkened streets, oblivious of the approach of others. Nowadays

lovers must conduct themselves like respectable, long-married folk.

These two were not lovers all at once, however. The attentions which Barnavaux showed to Louise, whose surname I never knew until long after—she had never told me, and I never thought of asking her—and the manner in which Louise accepted them were very discreet. Indeed, from their behaviour, I might have imagined I was among people in a far higher class of society. This seems to prove to me that we French, who are a very ancient people, are on the way to becoming a nation of aristocrats; forty millions of us, each having a pride and reserve of our own, a need for a certain amount of leisure, and with our impulses and inclinations well in hand.

There is only one thing that mars the progress: defective education, rough speech, and an obscenity that hasn't even the excuse of being unconscious. However, aristocrats have been badly brought up before now.

Another thing that, to my mind, had an aristocratic ring, was the fixed, frank and quite irrational conviction shared by both Louise and Barnavaux, that to be of the

lowest rank in France is to be quite superior to any foreigner. Of course it was quite natural in Barnavaux, for he had ruled all his life; he had been a "white man" among natives, and a soldier—a sort of cavalier, in fact. But Louise, who spent evening after evening in the company of anarchists at the U.P., was of the same opinion, and that was the reason why she frequented such meetings! They fed her pride and insisted on her rights.

If you reflect upon it, this is a curious result to spring from the humanitarian or "individualistic" teachings of certain good bourgeois dreamers, or the ravings of a certain class of self-taught, self-educated madmen. Their only effect had been to give Louise an exaggerated idea of her own value; she considered herself as important as anyone else, and her firmly-rooted conviction, which, by the way, is also that of all modern Frenchmen, just as it formerly sprang entirely from the nobles, was that the Government—the nobles would have said the King, that is the only difference —owed her something because of her personal worth. In the meanwhile, as she received nothing from the Government,

she worked hard at making purses ten hours out of the twenty-four, and was invariably gay, untiring and brave.

Had she been in the receipt of an allowance, she would have worked just the same, because of her need for action, her desire to get on, and her grim determination to owe nothing to anybody, not even to Barnavaux.

The women of the peasant and bourgeois classes have a *dot;* amongst the working classes they slave to earn their living and the result is always the same: in no other country are the women more the equals of men.

The modesty of Louise, or rather her shrinking from man, as well as her desire for him, was purely instinctive. She put off the inevitable, saying that first of all she must leave her people, she must have a room, a bed, furniture, in fact, a home of her own, all of which could not be procured without money. However, I heard her say to a friend one day, "Of course I ought to have all these things first, but if I can't get them in two months' time, I'll make shift anyhow."

Whenever Barnavaux mentioned his

savings, and his re-enlistment money, she wouldn't hear him. For a long time I felt sure it was her chastity struggling to defend itself, but the explanation wasn't quite so simple! There is no woman in the world, nor man either for the matter of that, who does not hesitate before taking this decisive step, and we should realise that better were we not infected by a hundred years of anti-human literature.

I knew quite well when that slight thing had happened which is at the same time so great and worthy of respect. And, as is usually the case, it had come about for purely exterior and apparent reasons. Barnavaux, who had been garrisoned at the Nouvelle-France barracks, was sent with the rest of his company to the fort at Palaiseau. Separated, and seeing less of each other, they felt the pressing need of changing the manner of their meeting.

One day, when we had arranged a meeting in the Boulevard Montparnasse, Barnavaux pushed Louise forward.

"Madame Barnavaux!" he said.

He had hit upon this delicate plan for dealing with the situation; had it been the Colonies, he would have added much to

his remark. But Louise looked down, with eyes that had lost their man's gaze.

She said to me later, "I didn't realise it was such a little thing. We ought to get married, I think." That was the only remark I ever heard her make on the subject, but at the moment it came upon me that the patient effort of woman, during countless centuries, to ensure her happiness and the safety of her children, and also the centuries of religious faith had not been in vain, and those people were wrong who made light of such matters.

Barnavaux, too, had changed. He still spoke of Louise in an easy way, and strove to retain his old voice, and to say as he used "ma mousso" or "ma congaye"; but he knew well that she wasn't a "mousso" nor a yellow "congaye"; she was a white woman, and he respected her. He had more respect for her, perhaps, than a man who had never seen the world, and who had never had little slaves. He was conscious that Louise was a woman of his blood, and the knowledge moved him. His face was different when with her; he dreaded to have to go away again. His native soil, as well as the woman, held him.

He knew he would be sent away some day, and she knew it as well as he. That was why they bravely avoided speaking of the future, but one day he said to me :

"If only I had learned a trade, *bon Dieu!*"

BARNAVAUX ON GUARD

THE little long-handled spoons, arranged in sheaves in the glass vases at each end of the zinc counter, looked like artificial flowers, badly made and of a garish brilliance. There were also baskets, containing red-coloured eggs, and almost every minute a customer would come and place his glass under a fine jet at the summit of a fountain of sham silver that stood in the centre of a large basin. The water fell upon the liquor from a height, and turned it first a decayed and hideous green, which in its turn faded into a beautiful pale tint.

Tiny drops spurted over the edge of the glass, and splashed the basin, and then the man drank in the manner peculiar to lovers of absinth, not as though he were quenching his thirst, but satisfying a raging hunger. The odour of alcohol and aniseed was wafted as far as the street, giving a strange impression of refinement and

brutality, which vaguely turned the mind to other thoughts both voluptuous and repulsive: the scent of flowers in a smoke-laden room, the expression of certain women, the sight of blood.

"I say, the proprietor knows his business, doesn't he?" said Barnavaux.

When the basin was full of the tinted water, the barman dipped a tin can into it, and watered the pavement with the contents. That was the reason of the powerful, seductive odour: the landlord sprayed the pavement with absinth in order to entice customers.

Presently a man came in, and ordered the drink sold almost exclusively in this house. All the other customers had been either soldiers, workmen or "unfortunates," but to the most inexperienced gaze this man revealed himself as an unfortunate of another and more horrible kind.

He was dressed in a grey coat, covered with filthy stains, and a dilapidated pair of trousers. There are wounds so dishonorable and ugly, that at sight of them one involuntarily turns away; they inspire disgust, not pity.

Such a feeling was awakened in me by

the face of this man. It was of a leaden hue, covered with pale pink blotches, and adorned with a rough, grizzled beard of some weeks' growth. His nose was swollen to a puffy whiteness, and his collar and tie were filthily dirty, but the vile creature was actually wearing gloves.

He approached Barnavaux with a smile that displayed his horrible, discoloured teeth, and offered him a drink, but Barnavaux looked away from him, and said hesitatingly to me:

"We're off now, aren't we?"

Generally speaking, Barnavaux is not particular in his choice of acquaintances, and I could see that the man was about to offer drinks round. I didn't press him for any explanation, however, as the moment was unsuitable; I simply paid the reckoning, and we went out in silence.

"Does that man know you?" I asked at length.

"Yes," answered Barnavaux, "and I thought he was dead. It positively sickens me to think he is still alive; he isn't fit to live. If you only knew how he exists! And he wanted to pay for drinks with that money! Ugh!"

It is a rare thing for Barnavaux to have a fit of morality: I know that he is above vulgar prejudice. But for all that I waited until he felt inclined to finish his story, and he was longer over that than I expected. The theme was a difficult one to unravel, because it contained horror of an abstract kind, which he found it impossible to describe or explain. He has no words for the abstract; it's not in his line.

"You never knew Père Bordieux," he began at last, "the Governor of the grain Coast; he had left when you came to Boké, but you must have heard people speak of him. He was an unpretentious little man, with a serious face and the eyes of a child. Imagine a missionary wearing a frock-coat because he is 'anti-clerical,' and you've got Père Bordieux.

"In those days Boké wasn't the fine town it is to-day, built in the American fashion, with its fountains, and its boulevards and avenues at right angles to one another, with its cement pavements kept in constant repair by negroes pushing little trolleys.

"Bordieux planned it all, and built it with the money he saved when he went

there first. I have heard it said that, if one of his clerks wanted a new pencil, he had first of all to go to the Governor who gave him a check for five centimes, stating the purpose for which the pencil was required.

"He had but few clerks, it's true; in the early days you could count them all on the fingers of one hand. The secretary-general, the police commissioner, and the chief of the soldiery, who at the same time acted as grave-digger and caretaker of the cemetery.

"Père Bordieux saw to everything, or nearly everything, himself, like a modern King of Yvetot, and he ruled his colony like a big landowner with a number of farms in his possession. Every morning he went round the town, and stopped to speak with the poorest as well as with the greatest; to the rich merchants engaged in great india-rubber industries, and to those with their tray full of a heterogenous collection of articles spread on the ground around them: old trousers, alarum clocks that rang furiously but didn't go, imitation amber and glass beads. These hawkers are usually Syrians or Maltese, horribly dirty and the biggest thieves in creation. But Père

Bordieux spoke with them all. 'Good day,' he would say; 'is business flourishing?' And if there were any complaints he would settle matters in his own fashion. He was a kind of St. Louis sitting under a green umbrella instead of the traditional oak-tree, which, by the way, does not grow in Boké.

"That is how Boké grew into the fine city you found when you went there, with modern houses built in the very middle of what used to be the Bush. A lot of people had come there, and crowds of women of course: little negresses from Sierra Leone, who made a pretence of selling oranges, and went regularly to the English church on Sundays; others who had run away from the school of the Sisters of Sainte-Catherine; six Japanese girls, two Wallachians and some Frenchwomen.

"Père Bordieux didn't ask them whether business were flourishing, but he let them be; because of his respect for freedom in commerce, I suppose. But sometimes he would say, 'Unhappy creatures! they and I are the only ones who won't grow rich here!'

"One thing is certain, and that is that he took no personal interest in them. He was

renowned in Boké, and also laughed at, for the purity of his life. So every one was very surprised one day to hear that he had taken a little house towards Pointe-aux-Douaniers, had furnished it and engaged a negro cook and a boy. I was told he touched the bed and the painted wicker chairs, the hangings and the couch for the siesta, like a lover.

"The following month, an elderly lady disembarked from the steamer, and immediately inquired for the Governor, requesting to be taken to his residence.

"No one heard what transpired at their meeting, but soon all the town knew that the Governor had ordered his carriage—he who always went on foot even at the hottest time of the day—and had himself accompanied her to the little house he had taken.

"No one thought of commenting upon this, for in the Colonies, every one has the right to order his life as he likes. It was possible that he had known the lady when he was quite, quite young, and she, whose hair was now fast whitening, was not yet old.

"On leaving the house, however, Père Bordieux drove to the residence of the

Chief Justice—I told you Boké had grown, and it now possessed a court of justice—and said to him, 'My mother has just arrived. Will you kindly publish the fact? She will not receive in any official capacity, nor live at Government House. I am an illegitimate child, and she has had a great struggle to bring me up. She has been a very, very unhappy creature.'

"I don't know why he should have used the same words in speaking of her as he had done of the other women. I suppose it was just accidental, and no one in Boké worried about that, because he was so much loved by all.

"He frequently dined and spent the evening with his mother, and sometimes she went to see him. When she went abroad in the town she was treated with the utmost respect and deference. It might have been different had she tried to play at being the mother of the Governor, but she was timid and spoke to few; and you could see that it was timidity and not pride that kept her in the background.

"All the same, you can imagine that some people tried to enlist her services, came to her and offered her money—to the Gover-

nor's mother! She received them in such a manner that they never returned a second time.

"Sometimes, when walking in the town, her eyes would fill with visible joy and emotion. She was thinking, 'My son has done all this! and I brought him up, all by myself.' What a feeling that must be. One would be a woman only for the chance of experiencing it; it is the richest, fullest sentiment in the world; there is nothing above it."

Louise looked at Barnavaux and nodded her head; she understood.

"One day," Barnavaux continued, "I was on sentry-go at Government House, when a white man I didn't know came up. I couldn't say whether he was well dressed or badly, for in the colonies all dress alike, white linen jacket and trousers, and white sun-helmet. Besides it was not my place to receive or refuse visitors. I was on guard, as I said, with my gun and sword-bayonet, and therefore no good to anyone, except in the case of a riot or attempt at murder, both of which, of course, never occurred. The man walked into the vestibule, without addressing me, and said to a black employé, 'I've

just arrived from France by to-day's steamer, and I wish to speak to the Governor.'

"Père Bordieux received every one, even niggers, and this man was a white. He was at once taken upstairs to the Governor, who never remembered having seen him before, for I heard him say. 'Excuse me, monsieur, but I do not know you.' 'But I've recognised you,' said the other, chuckling.

"When, as was now the case, the heat of the day had passed, the Governor always worked on the first-floor balcony so that he could feel the sea-breezes, and I could hear every word that was said. 'You've recognised me?' said the poor Governor. 'What do you mean?' 'I'm your father!' returned the other, as insolent as a butcher's boy in his cart. 'What do you mean?' repeated Père Bordieux. 'I don't understand.' But I could tell by his voice, which had suddenly changed, that he was afraid of what he was about to hear. The man went on, 'Yes, your father! your father! your father! Do you want me to shout it out? I don't mind doing that. I'd like to, because you're a son I can be proud of. That's why I've claimed you. Here's a

copy of the birth certificate, privately sealed, and copied into the state registers. When I heard you were Governor, I thought it worth my while going to the expense of coming out to see you. I've hit on my family, and that's a pleasant thing for a man of my age who hasn't had much in the way of luck.'

"The Governor murmured something I could not catch, but the other cried out, 'Bring the case before the court, will you? Just try and see! You'll lose it right enough. *She's* here, I know, and can be questioned. Give me her address and we'll soon see.' I don't know what movement Bordieux made, but when the man spoke again, it was in a cringing voice, every syllable punctuated by fear. 'You wouldn't kill me? You daren't.'

"Then I understood Pére Bordieux's fleeting impulse, and thought both it and the movement that had frightened the other for a moment the most natural things in the world. I swear if he had ordered me to come up with my gun and sword-bayonet, I—I don't know what I should have done.

"But he was Governor, a man with a high

position, and a great destiny; besides, his courage failed him because he was such a good man. Presently I heard him say, 'What will you take not to stay here? You can't stay here! What do you want?' 'What do I want?' said the man. 'Why, I want a sufficient allowance to keep me in comfort. It's the law, you know; I have a right to it. It's got to be proportionate to your rank too, so that I can keep mine as your father. It's my right, I tell you, come! you know that as well as I do!'

"I heard no more after that, but one thing is very certain, and that is, that the man took the next boat home. He had got what he wanted, and was blind drunk from that day. He had to be carried to the boat."

"So that's the man who came in just now?" I said, after a pause.

"Yes," said Barnavaux, "that's him."

"He's a beauty!" remarked Louise.

She said no more during the rest of the walk, but remained wrapped in thought.

As she dropped behind us to look at a child's bonnet displayed on a stall, Barnavaux said:

"Perhaps I oughtn't to have told you that in front of her."

I looked at him, and saw that his face was very grave.

"Yes," he went on, "about the illegitimate child, and the father turning up like that, and all the rest!"

He went on a few steps; and then, unable to hide his anxiety, he said between clenched teeth:

"She's enceinte."

A MEMORY

IT was because of Müller. Barnavaux had sent me word that his friend was in trouble, and must be taken out of himself. I knew what sort of trouble it must be too; I had met him before, perhaps you may remember, abroad. He had always been a sentimental sort of fellow, the type that Barnavaux generally treats with contempt. Anyhow, it was because of him we had gone in the direction of Issy, giving an occasional helping hand to Louise, who was beginning to find walking very tiring and had ordered déjeuner at Mère Mahieu's *cabaret* just below the fort.

We had all the valley of the Seine spread out before us, from St. Cloud and the Mont-Valérien, as far as Paris. Everything conspires to detract from its beauty, but it is always beautiful, more beautiful than ever, even than in the days when its inhabitants were composed of savage tribes.

Against a background of wild luxuriant

trees, which are all that remain of some old garden, high railway bridges have been erected, along which the trains travel to and fro. Looking toward the west, covering the two ranges of hills, is a kaleidoscopic confusion of houses, interspersed with trees that will persist in living in spite of everything. Straight in front of one is an army of factory chimneys—a formidable army, indeed. But beneath and around them are such glorious splashes of colour. You see bright patches of blue, which, if you look closely, resolve themselves into painted wooden palissades, and on that day the grey arches of the bridges blended so perfectly with the luminous, misty atmosphere that nothing in the world, in the most beautiful country I have ever visited, could fill me with such enthusiasm. And over all was the sense of teeming humanity.

But Müller made no remark. He could think of nothing but his trouble, and would take no notice of the joys of life. When I spoke to him, he was overcome with shyness; and, if Barnavaux addressed him, he merely shrugged his shoulders. At last Barnavaux said:

"Whatever did you fall in love with that

woman for? She didn't want you! The first thing you should think of when you begin courting a woman is does she want you, or could she ever be made to. But it's always the same with you: you're always gone on the ones that won't have you."

Müller shrugged his shoulders as if to say a man has small choice in these matters.

"Oh, yes," went on Barnavaux, "you've only got to set about it the right way. Besides, anyone ought to have the decency of knowing when they're not wanted. I——" He stopped a moment, looking at Louise, and then went on, "Yes, the same thing nearly happened to me, but I was younger than you, and there was more excuse for me. It was at the end of my last leave, when I was orderly to Andral.

"He had been advised to go to the seaside for the health of one of his children, so the whole family went to Bray-Dunes, a little village near Dunkirk, on the Belgian frontier. I've seen a good many countries since, as you know, any amount of them, but to this day it gives me a queer feeling when I think of that place; there's nothing approaching it anywhere, and no people like the people there. I have heard it said that,

a very long time ago, an Italian ship was wrecked off Bray-Dunes and the survivors settled down there and married, so that now the inhabitants are neither Belgians nor Flemish, but a race apart, and unlike any other.

"It's my opinion, too, that they made their houses, their gardens, their fields, their canals and their boats according to ideas of their own, and to please themselves. For instance, there are green shutters in all the houses in Flanders, and there are quick-set hedges in nearly every country under the sun; but at Bray-Dunes the entire contents of the houses are washed, scrubbed and brushed every Saturday, and then hung out on these towering hedges: blue and red clothing, snow-white linen, and pewter vessels rubbed shining bright with sand. And this is not all done at random. It's like a review of household effects, but also something like an exhibition of pictures. I can't explain what I mean, but when you see it, it impresses and moves you.

"What about the men? I never saw a man all the time I was there. They go to the Iceland fisheries in March, and do not

return until August or September. The women remain behind, alone, so, reckoning up, you will find that all the births take place in May or June, and not one of the women but has a baby. To-day it's Maria, to-morrow, it's Jeanne or Julie. There are cradles at every door and all along the road to the church, *bon Dieu!* it's a procession of women, each one carrying on her back a wicker basket, adorned with a crying or sleeping baby.

"But what about afterwards? The women begin thinking, 'Our men are coming, they are coming home!' Ah! if you could have seen their eyes! No, not their eyes—they were unchanged—but their gaze was different. It was so clear, so pure, so burning, for, when a woman has had a child, she has renewed herself, and her desire for love is strong and primitive and beautiful.

"And all these women are the same, all of them, at this season, when the big yellow sunflowers look over the hedges, and the scent of the roses reaches you from a great distance, when the sea looks golden, and the earth scorches your feet as you walk along, and your body as you lie on it.

"And they all make themselves beautiful,

not only themselves but their houses. It is the women who paint red patterns on the green shutters, and all sorts of extraordinary designs on the curbs of the big round wells. They are coming, think of that; they are coming!

"And during all this time, *nom de Dieu!* I was the only man in the place. You know the feeling when you hear a crowd of people all singing together, an uplifted, exalted feeling. I was uplifted, exalted, and kept on repeating to myself 'but *I* am here, *I* am here!'

"The most beautiful of them all was Lisa—Lisa Debauve, she was called. She was the one I wanted. Nearly every day, she went off prawning with her red skirts turned up over a pair of striped flannel drawers, just short enough to show her bare legs and knees and the lower part of her thighs.

"When a man begins to want a woman, there is always some special thing about her that he loves and desires particularly, something he sees at once when he thinks of her."

Until now Müller had not seemed to be listening, but at the last remark of Barna-

vaux's he nodded his head. He, too, had experienced that and agreed with him.

"Well, as far as I'm concerned," went on Barnavaux, "it was the knees. For the rest, I could describe Lisa in detail to you to-day. I remember well the way her body curved from the waist downwards; the firm lines of the back, the full breasts under the loose coat. Then the superb, stately neck supporting the tranquil head with its crown of twisted hair, of a ruddy colour on the top and fair underneath, just like one of those rings the African smiths make of two different coloured golds. Yes, I remember all that, and it was beautiful, but when I think of her knees—ah, her knees! They looked so fragile and yet so strong, with a sort of dimple in them, and they moved so beautifully when she walked! The different movements of the knees are alive; they change like the expression of the face."

Barnavaux stopped to think out something that seemed to him very difficult to express.

"Yes, this is what I mean: men and women are the only creatures that walk on two feet only, aren't they? Well, that's why the knees have these special qualities.

Monkeys have hands, but they haven't any knees.

"As soon as Lisa came out of the water, she used to let her red skirt down over her legs, but I followed behind her with the same vision in my mind's eye; I could still see the knees.

"I used to speak gently, so as not to alarm her, in the first place, and also to keep a firm hold on myself. Words have so much effect on one, and the mere manner of pronouncing them helps one either to control or to let oneself go. I don't want to brag. It's a poor thing to boast about such trifling matters, and I got over all that long ago. I'm not so young as I was. But I must tell you that Lisa was well aware of what was in my mind, and I was sure of getting what I wanted. Think a bit! I was the only man in the village among all those women, and I had picked out the one I meant to have. It was a tempting situation, wasn't it?

"The tides were coming in very late now, and it was quite dark when the fisherwomen returned with their nets. I had no desire to be taken for a man who likes to show off his conquests, I didn't want any talk about

it, so I waited on the sandhills, near the little path up which I knew Lisa would come alone. And when, in the distance, I saw her shadow, which was blacker than the dark night, I called out 'Good evening, Lisa!'

"There must have been a change in my manner of addressing her, for I suddenly felt like another man, and as bold as brass. And there was a catch in Lisa's own voice as she replied, 'Good-evening, Barnavaux.' Footsteps make no sound on the sand, and the next moment I was beside her, with my arm round her waist. 'Ah!' she said, 'I thought so! It had to come!'

"In a clear, resounding voice, without attempting to struggle, she called out towards the cottage above us, 'Na—oh! Na—oh!' I was so surprised that I dropped my arm. 'What is it?' I asked. 'Who are you calling like that?' 'My little girl,' she replied simply.

"It isn't a good sign for women to call their children at such moments, and I said rather stiffly, 'That's a queer name for a little girl!' 'Yes, it's short for Christina,' she said. 'Christina?' 'Yes. It's the name of a woman my husband goes to see when

he's in Iceland, his wife over there, in fact. So I thought it would please him if I called the baby after her.'

"I did not hesitate a moment, 'That's fine, Lisa,' I said, 'it's splendid! Good night. Shall I carry your basket for you?' 'No,' she said, 'I haven't far to go now.' And I took myself off," finished Barnavaux, "and was careful to avoid her in the future."

Müller looked at him in amazement.

"Whatever for?" he asked.

"Because I'd had a lesson," answered Barnavaux. "A woman who can do a thing like that belongs to no other man but her husband. There's no doubt about that!"

"No doubt at all!" repeated Louise in a tone of conviction.

THE TORNADO

WHAT was accomplished by Louise during the months that preceded the birth of her child, is, I presume, accomplished yearly by a hundred thousand women of the lower classes, married or single, only I had never had it so forcibly brought home to me. The eyes of the spirit are sometimes feeble and the imagination wanting.

To begin with, she announced the " news " to her stepmother. I was not aware that her father had married again, and that she had a stepmother. The fact was borne in upon me when the lady's name began to figure largely in the conversations Louise had nearly every evening with Barnavaux, I expected upheavals: the situation was most certainly not without its dramatic side. But if the moral side of the question were touched upon by the family—and I suppose it was, for Louise's eyes were often red and her heart heavy—at any rate,

neither she nor Barnavaux ever admitted as much to me. It was a subject on which Louise felt too strongly so speak.

What she did make a fuss about, and what specially worried her was the settling-up of the money side of the question. As she was leaving her family, she considered that it was no longer incumbent on her to share her earnings with them. To which the family replied that nothing would have been fairer, had she, with the consent of her family, and at a certain fixed date, entered upon the honourable estate of matrimony, but in the circumstance it was an entirely different matter. An irregular union had been thoughtlessly and impulsively contracted; in other words, she owed them some sort of compensation, for they had had every right to count on her earnings for some time to come at least. In the end Louise agreed to this arrangement, which, she told me, was fair and customary. The weekly payment was settled upon, and scrupulously adhered to, but from that moment Louise gave up making purses.

I imagined that this was in order to allow herself time to rest, for Barnavaux had kept his promise. He had paid for the room

and the furniture out of his savings, but Louise left that out of her calculations; she was living for another now and could think of nothing but the child who was to be born to her.

During those weeks in which women who are able to lavish every care upon themselves, and await the hour of their delivery in an ecstasy of self-adoration, Louise, of her own accord, had condemned herself to slavery.

From five to seven every morning she distributed newspapers, and then did charing for a clerk, at the Hôtel de Ville, and for a sculptor until twelve. She lighted the fires and washed up the things; she also did a little cooking, which saved her having to go out for her déjeuner. Then she sewed all the afternoon for a lady who was going to have a baby.

I could never find out whether it pleased her, or hurt her, to cut out and sew the clothes for the other little unborn child. I think that used to depend very much on the circumstances. Some evenings, after she had made the coffee for us, she would sit near the lamp and work for *her* baby, telling us she had got a pattern from Madame

Bacot. And she was happy enough then. At other times she would sit idle, looking wistfully at children's fashion books. Those were the days when the thing she wanted was too expensive, and she had to make shift with something else.

However, Louise was making her four francs a day, and Barnavaux wisely took his meals at Palaiseau, except on Sundays, and then it didn't cost him much, for I generally invited myself to dinner and brought the eatables with me. Barnavaux generously provided the drinks. Ah, how happy he was, and how changed!

"It must seem strange to you to see me with a white woman," he said to me one evening, "a white woman who belongs to me, I mean," he went on thoughtfully, "like my own wife, as you might say."

I did not think it strange; it was he who thought so. It is a very human trait to ascribe to others the recollections that haunt and the thoughts that fill you with amazement. Barnavaux knows that I remember the names of the women who have accompanied him a part of the way along his life's journey without having the power to hold him altogether, and the sight of me

had brought them back to his memory: Madame Edmée, Marie-faite-en-Fer, little Fatouma from the coast of Guinea, and Ketaka from Madagascar, with her plaited wool; and so many others, so many he had loved and left, who were dead now, or married to men of their own race.

"It's not the same," he said, "not a bit the same."

Now he had Louise, you see, his "wife, as you might say," the plucky little Parisian, who had toiled all day long at her housework and sewing, and who, when he returned to the barracks at Palaiseau, would faithfully await his return on the morrow, and would sleep alone, like a true wife.

He put his thumb on a drop of coffee spilt on the oilcloth tablecover, and rose thoughtfully from his chair; then, turning to the slender, womanly figure, he bent down and kissed the soft fair hair at the nape of her neck.

"My Louise!" he said.

He seemed almost ashamed of the tone of his voice; men who are getting on in life do not like to show their deeper feelings. As though to excuse himself, he repeated:

"It isn't the same at all; to begin with, we've got the shanty."

He glanced proudly round at his belongings, such meagre ones as they were! Louise had cooked the dinner on a little camp stove in the same room that held the bed and the chest of drawers; this one room constituted Barnavaux's shanty, but he had paid for the furniture himself; it was his own.

On the wall hung a Moorish sword in a red and yellow leather sheath; a dance-mask beside it boasted a six-pointed crown that made it look really devilish. Near these, hung a piece of painted silk, on which a Chinese lady, with a red flower in her towering chignon, was leaning against the balustrade of a terrace, and gazing at the blue waters of a river. There were boats on this river filled with more Chinese ladies, who gripped the slender oars with long, thin fingers. This piece of work was a perfect specimen of the refined and delicate art of the ancient empire, and had been carried off at the loot of Pekin. It was indeed a masterpiece, and looked upon with contempt by Louise, who could not understand its beauty.

She wouldn't take any notice even of

Barnavaux this evening. The heat and her condition had thoroughly tired her out. She was full of a lazy pride in having a home like a "bourgeoise," and, elbows on table and head in hands, was reading the paper, thankful that the day's work was over, and herself able to rest, quite convinced, moreover, that the conversation of men could have no interest for her.

"What are you reading?" asked Barnavaux.

"Another *gendarme* has been shot," she answered. "They are plucky, I must say." She repeated the word she had just read, "Heroes!"

"Oh, yes," said Barnavaux indifferently, "I daresay."

His indifference puzzled me. He knew something about heroism too!

"Fancy you saying that," he remarked to Louise, "a little anarchist like you!"

But Louise had forgotten the past, and was unfaithful to the memory of the U.P. at Plaisance where she had first met Barnavaux. Now she had a personal interest in the defence of the country, and was rather proud to think she had so easily adopted conservative views. Barnavaux protested, however.

"Heroes, do you call them? That's what you say when somebody's done something that has injured themselves and by which you have profited in some vague sort of way. Don't you think it would be far more interesting and instructive to learn what heroism really is?"

The time for his train was drawing near. He buckled on his belt, and I went with him as far as Port-Royal Station.

"That sort of expression makes me sick," he went on, resuming the conversation, "it's so easy to shout 'hero,' and that's why we hear it so often. I've seen some plucky actions in my time, as you know, so I've some right to talk.

"I was once travelling up the Débo in a barge in charge of sacks of rice that were going to Timbuctoo. You know the Débo, don't you? I met you there in 1904 when you were going to Kabara. Well, as you know, it's not a lake; it's a sea! When you remember that during the rains the Niger, which runs into it, is three leagues and a half wide! It's enough to fill a fair-sized hole, isn't it? The hole *is* a deep one and not by any means the only one. There are others, the Tenda, the Korienze, and many others.

I can't remember their names. I've been told there are thirty-four of them, but I've clean forgotten.

"Do you know I'm sure all that land must once have been under water, otherwise there wouldn't be so much of it now, and, to crown all, all these lakes overflow and join each other during the floods, making one huge expanse of water. It's impossible to tell the one from the other, or to know your whereabouts.

"Sailors are sent there nowadays to man the steamers, real navy men, but at such times they aren't any more good than the others were. They leave the steering to their negro pilots, Somonos, born in the district, and it's by far the wisest plan, for the place abounds in hidden dangers. Sometimes great blocks of sandstone concealed by the water rip open the unwary boat, or she gets landed among what looks like a confusion of long green leather straps, which in reality are the branches of a most extraordinary plant, rooted in the lake, and growing to the height of a tall tree.

"You are not on land or on the water, but sailing along in the most ridiculous manner over fields of grasses that twist and

untwist and float, and are bright with blossoms, with flowers like big white goblets resembling chalices. Some of the smaller ones are pink, and others of a bluish tint like our marsh mallows. You sail along, over these fields of blossom, and that is how I was travelling with my eighteen barges, laden with rice, and ploughing their way through a massacre of flowers!

"Do you remember what these Niger barges look like? What they most resemble, both for speed and shape, is a wooden sabot. The body of the boat is narrow, and the bows are covered in, just like a giant slipper. You sleep under this roof and there is just room to lie down. As soon as the heat of the sun grows less ardent, you sit on the roof, and do the grand, enjoying the breeze and admiring the scenery, while the Somonos ply their poles.

"There are twelve of these fellows to each barge, six on either side, and they run to and fro over the roof and the sacks of rice. These twelve niggers, recruited from the fishing villages on either bank, keep up a monotonous chant, a kind of song confined to three notes only, that sounds like church bells ringing for high mass. They jump

round their poles, indeed, you might almost call it a kind of dance, and they are quite naked except for the bit of dirty rag they wear around their loins. Twelve black devils, with calfless legs, thick muscular necks, and bestial faces. These faces are almost entirely destitute of nose, and partly on account of this, and partly because of the efforts they are forced to make when punting, their eyes appear to be jumping out of their heads.

"I was the only European in command of the eighteen barges. The country is quite peaceful nowadays, and for my part I think Kabara a safer place to visit than Pantin.

"Of course I never had anything to do with my men; I looked upon them as mere machines, placed there for the purpose of propelling the boat; I'd as soon have talked to a paddle-wheel! So the only thing left to do was to shoot hippopotami—and that's exciting enough, for you always miss them—or to invent new uses for various articles, to improvise a coffee-pot from a saucepan, for instance. Then you could sing sentimental ditties, or 'Derrière l'Hôtel-Dieu,' which isn't exactly sentimental,

but as none of the young ladies you meet on the banks of the Niger understand French it really didn't matter.

"What I really looked forward to most of all was my dinner. The boats would stop by some little sandy strip on the mainland when it could be discovered, but generally off some island, and the chief men of the district would bring fowls, fish, and sometimes a sheep, for which I paid them a fair price. Then I enjoyed my dinner, while my men hastily devoured their boiled millet and began to dance; they had danced already on the sacks of rice, but here they danced even better.

"I hardly ever deigned to leave my boat, but was served like a prince on the roof, and from the height of my grandeur contemplated the scene before me.

"I was watching the fun one evening according to my custom; the weather was glorious, and I was enjoying myself. In order to make themselves as grand as possible my men had put on their *boubous*, long pieces of pale blue or white linen, and with mouths wide open were chanting their eternal song, the white line of teeth making a gleaming streak in each ebony face.

"There were children, too, galloping around the tomtoms, with hollowed-in backs and protruding stomachs, and five or six tall, handsome girls, with strips of white and yellow checked cloth round their hips. As they leapt and bounded in the dance their firm breasts would tremble like arrows buried in a wooden door.

"Suddenly, ah, and rapidly, too; in fact, it seemed instantaneous, like the sudden start of an electric train, a furious gust of wind struck me a blow on the side of the face, and rain that stung like a whip began to pour down. There were peals of thunder, and between the flashes of lightning the blackness of night all around—the tornado, of course!

"You know the manner of it; a splash in the water, and my folding table, enamelled plate, wine bottle, glass and a haunch of mutton disappeared beneath the waves, gone beyond recall; at first I could think of nothing else.

"The sound of rushing water continued, tap, tap, tap! Bang! Smash! The waves were having a game against the sides of the boat. I was adrift in the middle of the Débo.

"My second thought was, 'What a stroke of luck the waves didn't wash me overboard!' My next, 'It would have been wiser to take a header nearer land, it'll be rather too exciting out here!'

"By this time I was wet through, and I went inside to shelter. A little black ball rolled between my legs; it was the kitchen-boy, a lad of twelve, who had stayed behind to look after the fires. His face was grey, and his whole body trembled; he was terrified with the terror of an animal, and so vile and ugly in his terror that I struck him across the face; he impressed me with the seriousness of my position, you see.

"There is a high mound of sandstone in the middle of the lake, as straight and perpendicular as a wall. It was no longer visible: nothing could be seen, in fact. Besides the chances as to my pitching on it or not were even, and I almost regretted that, for after all it was land in a kind of way, and I might with a bit of luck be able to cling on to it somehow. I was much more concerned about the rocks hidden under the water, and those damned waterweeds.

"Once the boat got caught in them by

the bows; she turned completely round, plunged forward, and took about a ton of dirty water on board, and then righted herself.

"The rice in my boat weighed very heavy the sacks making a pile that reached highe than the roof, but it never came into my head to throw out a single one. I swear I never once thought of doing so, for I had to give an account of the full number. But all the time I was thinking, 'If I drift on to a rock with this cargo, or even on to the mud, I'm done for!'

"Suddenly the barge stopped dead. I shouted to the boy—it was a relief to speak to anyone—'That's done it! we're aground.' I was wrong, however; it wasn't shallow water, but a *doubalel*, a kind of giant fig-tree, submerged during the floods so that its branches barely showed above the water. At first I thought it was covered with flowers, but then I said to myself that that could not be, there were too many colours. They were not flowers, but little birds, red and blue and green. They, too, were terror stricken, and the wind was so strong that they dared not attempt to fly. Occasionally I saw egrets fly over my head, ploughing the wind

with their soft wings, and looking exactly like pieces of linen blown off a hedge. They were amongst the lucky ones and would reach land.

"Just at this moment the barge got entangled in the branches of the tree, and, struggling against the violence of the storm, heaved right over on to her side. I began to swear as I saw some of the sacks of rice sink; we were certainly going down! But just as suddenly she righted herself again, and I saw, first two hands, then four, then many more on the gunwale, followed by eleven heads, eleven black faces, eleven out of my twelve men! They got over the side of my boat, and the head-man, on seeing me, remarked 'Good.'

"The poles were piled up under the roof and the kitchen-boy was seated on the top of them, motionless with fright. The head-man dislodged him with a kick—what a time he had that day, poor young martyr!—distributed the poles to his men, and they all began to punt vigorously.

"The water was so shallow that half the time they were on their knees, but they did not cease their usual chanting of the three notes all the same. But one

of the crew was missing. 'Where's Samba Laobé?' I asked. 'Samba Laobé no swim! Much bad weeds,' answered the head-man simply.

"They had actually swum to the barge, and had caught up with it as it wandered from right to left at the mercy of the storm. And one out of the twelve had been drowned! They seemed to think that a small matter, one out of twelve! '*Do, re, sol! Do, re, sol!*' It wasn't worth thinking about, and, drenched by the waves, they went on with their work. Ah, they were heroes if you like!

"When we reached the shore again, the negresses resumed their twisting and twirling with new words to their songs, 'The white man has returned! He is not dead! He is a great chief! Much good fetish!' Samba Laobé was drowned, however; he had not 'good fetish!' but that was not referred to in their account of him.

"We found his body the next day in the becalmed waters of the lake; not that we were searching for him, but a flock of carrion crows and two gulls were perched upon him, feeding. He could be seen at a distance. I ordered his body to be placed in the stern

of the boat so that it might be buried at the first halting-place.

"I now thought I ought to acquaint the authorities with what had happened; after all I owed it to my men! They would receive five sous above the usual pay, or perhaps extra rations. So, while they were punting the boat along the Débo, I took a sheet of notepaper, and as my table was a thing of the past began to write upon my knees. Writing isn't much in my line, and it took up all my attention. Presently, however, I noticed that we were stationary. I looked up and saw the head-man salaaming with outstretched arms, and an exceedingly worried look on his face. 'No tell commandant! No tell!' he implored.

"What! and I was trying my hardest to find words in which to relate how they had saved my life! I thought he didn't understand and tried to explain, but he shook his head in despair. 'No good tell commandant!' and the kitchen boy, who knew two or three words more, continued, 'Somonos men stay on boat! White man on boat, Somonos on boat! Always, always!'

"Do you understand? He meant

that the men must never leave the boat before the white man, and as they had landed so as to join in the dancing, they were in the wrong. Well, and supposing they were, what could have happened to them? They would have lost eight days' pay, four francs! Nothing could have been done to them even if I had been drowned, could it? But there was the order; it was forbidden!

"They had risked their lives to make up for their disobedience and one of them had been drowned—the one whose body was out there at the back of the boat—and it was the greatest wonder they were not all in the same case, but they never thought of that!

"That's what I call heroism," finished Barnavaux. "That sort of thing isn't done for fun! there's nothing else to be done; one cannot help oneself. Duty has to be considered, or, as an alternative, punishment. A man gets into the habit of never thinking of himself.

"Never thinking of himself?" I repeated. "Do you know that Louise, our little Louise——"

"My word," exclaimed Barnavaux,

"that's true! I never thought of that!"

The station clock marked a minute to the hour. Barnavaux disappeared down the stairway.

THE HARE

A PRETTY, refined-looking, fair woman, beautifully dressed, passed us. She was accompanied by a man, still young and extremely handsome, with an olive-coloured skin, soft yet brilliant dark eyes, and that indefinable smartness in his figure and carriage that denotes the officer.

He looked at Barnavaux, and I could see that Barnavaux knew him; but he did not make that involuntary movement to salute, so natural to the soldier when he meets a superior officer in mufti.

On this occasion, exactly the opposite thing happened. Barnavaux pretended to be examining a shop window with hypocritical attention; and the officer went his way, probably without having noticed anything unusual in Barnavaux's behaviour.

"Yes," said Barnavaux in answer to my question, "he does belong to my battalion, but he's in plain clothes: I needn't salute unless I like."

"Have you had a row with him?" I inquired, knowing that Barnavaux wasn't an easy customer to deal with.

"Me?" said Barnavaux, "no, never; but he's a *bounioul*, in other words, a nigger."

"Oh, come," I said, "he's as white as you or I."

"That's nothing to do with it," persisted Barnavaux, "he's got a touch of the tar-brush."

I should never have believed Barnavaux guilty of the same race prejudices that exist among the American "Northerners," and I told him so in no measured terms, and with much indignation.

"He's a man the same as you," I added, "only infinitely nicer to look at, and with much better manners."

"No, indeed," returned Barnavaux brusquely, "he's not a man like me. You're talking a lot of philosophical cant! It's nothing but humbug, I tell you, humbug!"

"The truth is that for thousands of years white men have proceeded in a direction never dreamed of by the blacks. They have striven for progress with head and heart and body, sometimes succeeding, at others failing, but they succeeded oftener than

they failed. If it wasn't for that we shouldn't have electric tramways in our streets, and our women would suckle their children until they were five years old, like the Congo women do, and then file their teeth and make cannibals of them.

"Half-breeds are a huge mistake, too; they spring from the union of that which should never come together, but, on the contrary ever and ever diverge more widely. The Americans you were speaking of just now are quite right in punishing those who are guilty of such a mistake, in the same way as soldiers are punished when they make an error, even an involuntary one. It is so that the army as a whole may be safeguarded."

"But would the army, that is to say the white races, suffer? That is the question."

"They *might*," answered Barnavaux, "and that's enough; we mustn't run any risks. If you want to play tricks of that kind, go and live in the moon, don't try them here, the consequences might have to be paid for too dearly!"

Selecting his words carefully, he went on:

"It's quite true that people find it difficult to think that way; it's a hard thing

to find courage to think that way, when they've never seen the niggers at home in their ordinary everyday life. They don't realise what they are like. When they meet a black man in Paris, all they think of is that his skin is a different colour to theirs. *I* think of straw and mud huts, and circumcised males dancing at night with obscene gestures, and negresses responding to those gestures.

"I think of what and how they eat, and how every one of them, yes, even my com rades, the Senegalese soldiers, treat the enemies they have killed."

"In spite of all this, they are decent fellows in their way, brave and docile, and willing to be loved and guided by us. But as for thinking they are like us, and that they leave nothing of themselves in the half-breeds of their race, well, no one but a man who had never been away from home can ever really believe that.

"I can remember once, at Rochefort, or in the neighbourhood, there was a *blanc-comme-ça-même* who lived at a château. Don't you know what *blanc-comme-ça-même* means? It's a word used near Tamatave, and is, I think, translated

almost literally from the Malagasy. It means a white man who isn't really a white, but looks like it, and at first sight might be taken for one.

"This fellow had been adopted by his grandparents, and was the heir. There was no help for it; he was the only son of their only son, who had died out in Africa. The old people were nobles, and very proud of their name, which they wished to perpetuate. To excuse themselves, they gave out that, not only was their grandson of noble birth on their side, but also on his mother's, she having been a descendant of the first white men in Senegal, the knights of ancient history, who one and all had 'de' before their name, and the daughters of native chiefs.

"I must admit, too, that if ever a handsome man and a plucky did exist, he was that man. All the country people loved him, as they would never have loved a pure white, for he was so generous; in fact his generosity was prodigious, like that of the chiefs of the Niger and Falémé, to whom giving is the only proof of riches and power. Besides, he liked to be well spoken of.

"When there were hunting or shooting parties, or fun of any kind he was always to the fore, the leader of them all. So you can imagine how it was with the women, when the men suffered his domination! Not one of them but had her head turned if he so much as glanced at her.

"There was something about him that gave you the impression he was naked, even when fully clothed; his limbs and sinuous muscles seemed visible beneath his dress, and you could plainly see the vigorous expansion of his chest, when he breathed with a fuller delight each time in the joy of being alive.

"And the eyes of this *bounioul* were as blue as the sky in his olive face, with long silken eyebrows and lashes. Such caressing eyes that when he looked at a woman she longed to say, 'Look again! look at me always, and tell me where you would have me go. I will do your bidding!'

"All the women were in love with him, and he could have had any of them: countrywomen, the women who hang about the cafés, concerts, and theatres, and others too, married women, who met him in secret. It's just possible that people exaggerated in

this matter, but the general opinion was that no woman could resist him.

"One thing I do know, and that is that Colonel Andral's daughter could not resist him either. Don't misunderstand me. She was a good little thing, as good as gold, and she wouldn't have given in without being married to him, unless—unless—well, you never can tell! Women are strange creatures! It's very certain that she was mad about him.

"All this happened a long time ago, when I was a recruit. My first leave had just expired, and I was the Colonel's orderly. I didn't know then what I know now; I was a mug, and it seemed really idiotic for Andral to refuse his daughter to such a charming fellow, so unspoiled and handsome as he was too. It seemed horribly cruel, especially when the poor little thing cried, and she used to cry every day. Had I dared, I would have risked a good deal for her to be able to have her handsome blue-eyed lover.

"My young lady knew I was on her side; she liked me; and, when I followed her on horseback, she knew I wouldn't tell if he met us on the way and had a gallop with her.

"On one of these expeditions, however, the Charente had overflowed like the Seine last year. The countryside had changed into a huge lake, with trees peeping out of the water here and there to show where the roads ought to have been in the natural order of things, and islands where the ground rose higher than the flood. It was a huge expanse of water, flat and grey-looking, almost motionless, except in the middle, where the swollen river flowed; and all this water resembled an immense tarnished slab of pewter.

"'Barnavaux,' said my young lady, 'we'll get into that little canoe, and I want you to take me over to that island. I'd like to explore it.' 'Very good, mademoiselle,' I replied, of course, and went to the boat-shed near the wharf to fetch the oars. As I expected, the young fellow was with her when I returned, and he got into the boat, just as if it were a matter of course, merely remarking, 'Good evening, Barnavaux.' 'Good evening, monsieur le comte,' I replied. I should be amused to-day at the idea of calling a *bounioul* 'monsieur le comte,' but, as I said before, I was a mug in those days.

"We pushed off, and I began to row with my back towards them. I occasionally heard the sound of a kiss, and what was the harm of that? I should have done the same had I been in his place!

"I rowed slowly to the island, and on reaching it jumped out, holding the chain that served as anchor, and was weighted with a heavy stone. When he helped her out of the boat, I could see by the look on her face that a decision had been arrived at, and that she would do anything he wished, at no matter what cost.

"It is a beautiful thing, even when it's no advantage to you, to see a woman make up her mind, and love with all her being—her heart, her head and her body! It brightened the country-side, and made a sunshine of its own on that heavy, cloudy day.

"They walked off together, so closely linked that they looked like one body, and they seemed to dance as they went along. I had landed too, but I stayed near the boat, so as not to be in their way.

"Suddenly I heard a cry from Mademoiselle Aimée; something had darted from under her feet and sped off like a bullet. It

was only a hare, an unfortunate hare held prisoner by the floods. It had startled and alarmed her; but, as she was a plucky little thing, she immediately began to laugh at her fright. Then I saw her face change with an extraordinary suddenness, and I understood the cause as suddenly—*he* was the cause!

"He had sprung forward, and I could never have believed it possible for a human face suddenly to assume such an animal appearance. His lips were drawn back, showing his teeth and gums, and for the first time I heard the negro grunt, the deep 'Ugh?' that marks his intense satisfaction, when, for instance, an order is given to storm a village.

"The hare was speeding away, already far ahead, his ears lying flat along his back, his feet looking like a confused blur; and soon his brown body was quite out of sight; there was only a commotion in the flooded grass, and the flying beads of moisture to mark his course. 'Ugh! Ugh!' the man was after him. He had clean forgotten he was with a woman who would give herself to him when and where he wished. 'Ugh! Ugh!' It was a fearful yet a magnificent sight.

The man was transformed into a hunting animal, and was gaining on the hare, gaining on him with those long legs of his, and those feet, whose tread was so light that it was inaudible save for the oozing sound from the sodden ground. He was panting, but for sheer delight, for he was not out of breath; on the contrary, the more he gained on the animal the stronger and happier did he become, and he quickened his pace anew.

"When the extremity of the island was reached, the hare would be brought to a standstill. Would he, indeed! The man evidently thought the same, for he stretched out his hands—his paws. But the hare doubled, and started off in the opposite direction.

"This went on for over an hour; they passed close to me again and again. There was blood on the hare's muzzle, and his eyes were ghastly in their terror, of a uniform, dull leaden grey, like the dirty water around us. The hunter had fallen down hundreds of times; he looked terrible, with mud-bespattered garments and torn hands. 'Ugh! Ugh!' Had he known what he was doing he would have stopped, for he,

too, was almost played out, but for the time being he was mad, absolutely mad!

"Finally the hare came to the end of the island where he had first been cornered. No doubt it was by that way he had come, and he hoped to see the path that should restore him to freedom, but only water lay before him. He was quite done up, and tried to enter the water, either to cool himself or to escape by swimming, I can't say, but the man pounced upon him, and his hands closed on the poor brute's neck. It gave a scream of anguish, and all was over.

"And to think that a short time previously I had called him 'monsieur le comte,' the creature who came towards us with the quivering, dying brute dangling from his fingers. It was a good thing he was covered from head to foot with mud, otherwise he looked what he was—a savage and naked. He had forgotten where he was. He tried to smile, unconscious that his lips were still drawn back to show his gums, that his face was the face of a beast. 'You savage! you are nothing but a savage!' shrieked Mademoiselle Aimée. 'Take me away, Barnavaux.'

"I took her away as quickly as I could. I had seen the nigger in him! I had learned what to expect from a *bounioul* before ever going near his country—and you? Do you understand the difference now?"

"*EAST IS EAST*"

THE young Chinaman came out of the Ecole des Sciences Politiques in the Rue Saint-Guillaume. He had the secretive, yet wide-awake glance peculiar to his race; his nose was flat, and at the same time aquiline, and over his sky-blue tunic a long plait hung from under his black skull cap, which was adorned with a coral button that shone like a scarlet cherry.

I knew he was Li-Ouang, whom I had met in Society, where he is much liked, even by the women; like all Chinamen, he loves flowers himself, and always knows how to present them to a lady in the prettiest way possible. This young fellow was looked upon as a rare and precious article; wherever he went, the mistress of the house always spoke of him as "my Chinaman," as she might of a valuable china vase.

I nodded pleasantly to him, and he returned my salutation, by lifting his two hands to his breast, Chinese fashion, then,

noticing Barnavaux beside me, he smiled almost imperceptibly, and passed on. Chinamen, even nowadays, have a scant respect for the profession of arms, and as for the private soldier they look down upon him with contempt.

Barnavaux noticed the smile, and flung the end of his cigarette into the gutter, returning the other's look of disdain.

"What's that chap doing over here?" he demanded.

"He is attending lectures," I answered. "He is being taught the history of civilisation in Europe, the history of the formation of peoples, the history of Napoleon I., and the history of international rights, and any amount of things you know nothing whatever about, Barnavaux. He's very clever."

Barnavaux shrugged his shoulders. "And you're friendly with him, I suppose, and so are his fellow-students. He goes to the cafés and to the women's houses and the theatres; in fact, he's treated like a European."

"Well," I answered, "why not? I've just told you he's very clever and very well educated; he can go anywhere. What does it matter to you?"

"Matter to me!" exclaimed Barnavaux, "I don't care a damn! But it's perfectly idiotic to treat a Chinaman like a European. Idiotic, I tell you. But I don't care; when he goes back to his own country, he'll soon find out the difference. It's because you're polite to him, and behave like a lot of fools, that he takes himself seriously over here. Once he gets back, he'll soon find out how much politeness and consideration he gets from the white men and women over there! And they are in the right, not you. Yes, let him wait a bit; he'll soon be put in his place?"

"I knew of a Chinaman once, just like this one. He'd been dragged about all over the place, and was on show everywhere. He was invited to Government functions, and to dinners. Yes, this unspeakable monkey dined with the wives of Ministers. You people over here don't realise things, and so long as all Frenchmen aren't compelled to spend a certain time in the Colonies they'll never be any wiser.

"One day a deputy, a very big man, said to him, 'When you go back to China, you must stop at Saigon, and visit the French colony there. I'll give you letters

of introduction, and you'll be received everywhere.'

"So he wrote the letters and gave them to him. The Chinaman took them with respect, for they look upon handwriting as all powerful, 'all-same-Buddha.' He put them at the bottom of a large, brand-new trunk, and booked his passage on a steamer.

"She was a large boat; one of the Messageries Maritimes, I suppose. It's only us poor devils they stick on a transport that takes three months to get there. This boat was crammed full; it was in the autumn, just when people were going out again.

"He'd taken a first-class ticket, and they put him in a cabin with two berths. But none would share it with him. Think of it! a Chinaman, a dirty Chinaman! I bet *you* wouldn't sleep with a Chinaman if it came to the point.

"Well, the captain put him with a French official, whose grandmother was a negress from Guadaloupe, but the official strongly protested, saying they were insulting the dignity of the white man, as represented by him.

"At last, however, he was tolerated by a missionary, a very decent fellow too.

He had a 'de' before his name, but he told us he couldn't see any difference between white and yellow men. He even went so far as to say that Chinamen had souls! He also said he knew this fellow's family, and that it was a very distinguished one. Missionaries have to make friends where they can; it's part of their business.

"At last they reached Aden, where there's nothing but eagles, snakes for the eagles to eat, and English people dying of the climate. Then Colombo—you remember Colombo, where the men wear a comb in their chignon like women—and at last the river Saigon.

"The Chinaman breathed in the smell of the river; his nostrils were filled with the smell of the mud, of those islands of mud that look as though they were floating on the river's surface, and which actually do, sometimes; mud islands of a sponge-like consistency, that lie as light on the water's surface as bundles of rushes, and that look like rafts covered with verdure. He was saying over and over to himself 'I'm at home at last! I'm at home.'

"But the boat travelled further and further along the slimy water at a very gentle pace,

for the dangerous places have to be avoided, places where the muddy water sticks to the boat like glue. Once a huge steamer was stranded there for a whole year, and the natives sowed rice around it and made a garden.

"Presently a wooden quay came into sight, a miserable looking quay, half eaten away by worms—and once again the Chinaman gazed upon France.

"Yes, France! for Saigon is now quite French. It's all very well to make fun of the navigators who've accomplished this, but it's very fine and grand, like one of our own towns, with proper houses and a church and theatre. You don't feel as though you were in China, it's not a bit like their towns; in the distance it makes you think of Bordeaux, or any French seaport. Indeed, it's much better than a European town, for you never see a white man doing menial work. You wouldn't catch a white man working as a navvy or labourer, in other words, doing coolie's work! All the white men are kings in their own right.

"There were numbers of rickshaws on the quay, carried by other monkeys of his race, and the Chinaman was just going to step into

one of them, just like a white man and rich Chinee combined, when a native seized him by the shoulder, a native policeman, with a sword-bayonet, and everything else calculated to inspire respect. 'No good!' says the native. 'What?' answers the Chinaman. 'No good,' repeats the policeman, 'you come with me.'"

"Ah, yes, I know," I interrupted.

Doctor Bertillon's ingenious methods have lately been introduced into our Colonies in the Far East, but they do not apply to white men, who come and go at will. They are the superior race, and are considered inviolate, and without blemish, while Chinamen are not to be trusted. In France the Bertillon method only applies to suspects; in Indo-China all Chinamen are looked upon as suspects.

"That's all right, then, you understand," continued Barnavaux. "The Chinaman was taken to the office in which he found others of his nationality, and a native official said to him, 'Say, you! You've got to strip naked. Look sharp! you yellow nigger!' 'Why?' asked the Chinaman from Paris. 'Look see tatoos,' said the native.

"But the Chinaman only understood good

French, and a white clerk explained matters. 'He's telling you to undress so that we can measure you, and note down any tatoo marks. You are tatooed, aren't you? Well, what are you waiting for? Take your clothes off, *nom de Dieu!*'

"But the Chinaman didn't like taking all his clothes off before a person to whom he'd never been introduced, he wasn't used to that sort of thing. Then he remembered the letters the deputy had given him. 'Where are these letters?' demanded the clerk. 'In my trunk,' he said. 'And do you imagine,' went on the clerk, 'that we are going to wait while every Chinaman opens his trunk before we get him measured up? Take off your pants, you yellow dog!'

"Then as he didn't hurry enough to please the clerk—well, I needn't enlarge upon that. The police has its own little way of doing things everywhere, and the Chinaman speedily recognised that fact. 'I won't land here! I'll go straight on!' he cried. 'I much prefer to go straight to China.' He went to China, but he didn't get much satisfaction out of that. A Chinaman nurses his wrath much longer than we white men do, and the Parisians had treated our

friend very differently to the French at Saigon. The difference had been forced upon him, and the taste was bitter in his mouth.

"So he went to Pekin, where he laid the matter before a great minister, I can't remember who, now. But before being admitted to the presence, he was obliged to make obeisance before him, falling seven times on his hands and knees, and bowing his head to the ground, that being another proof of the fact that he had left Europe behind him. The great man's private opinion was that the moment was not yet ripe for a tussle with the Western powers. Later, perhaps!

"He reflected a moment, then he said, 'The letters you speak of were given you by a great French mandarin?' 'By a great French mandarin,' answered the Chinaman, 'it is the whole truth.' 'Where did you put them?' queried the minister. 'In my trunk," replied the Chinaman.

"Then, in a voice of thunder, as if he were commanding an army, the minister cried, 'Shall I tell you what you are?' 'You are my father and my mother,' said the Chinee. 'You spawn of reptiles! Letters are given you by a great French

mandarin, and instead of treasuring them in your bosom you put them in your trunk, amongst the garments with which you clothe your miserable body. Is that a fact?' 'Yes, Excellency,' confessed the Chinaman. 'Well, you are going to receive a thousand strokes of the whip, to teach you to be more careful!'

"The Chinaman did have the whipping," finished Barnavaux, "and it taught him that in Indo-China, and even in China itself, a Chinaman *must not be treated like a white man!* Wisdom and policy have taught us this. You people over here know nothing about it, absolutely nothing."

PIERRE-CÉSAR

LOUISE'S son was born on the 12th of last February at the Pavillon Baudelocque. The next day, when Barnavaux was acquainted with the news, he sent me word. He had, however, to wait for the visiting day before he was allowed to see her. I couldn't understand why. After all, he was the father.

I went to meet him at 10 o'clock in the morning at the Port-Royal station, in the Avenue de L'Observatoire. The Pavillon Baudelocque is almost exactly opposite the station, so we had not far to go. Barnavaux turned up, beautifully shaved, his moustache curled, his buttons burnished as if for a review, and his face serenely happy. He was proud of having a son, and did not disguise the fact.

On arriving, Barnavaux said to the porter:

"Madame Collot, please?"

I looked at him, rather surprised, but the

BARNAVAUX TURNED UP BEAUTIFULLY SHAVED AND HIS MOUSTACHE CURLED

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porter understood at once; without hesitating, he replied:

"On the right, Room 6, Dr. Motte's ward."

We found our way easily enough. These low light buildings were clean-looking and almost pretty. Louise was lying in a white bed, with a pale but tranquil face. Her brown hair was hidden under a white cap, and all that she was likely to require was arranged on a glass bracket just above her head. Only the number struck you rather unpleasantly: it must be horrid to be only a number when you're ill. You are a French citizen, and have a name belonging to you entered in the parish registers, and an address. Still Barnavaux was sensible, and when he saw the eighteen little beds that filled this room, and thought of the many others in different parts of the building, he quite agreed that there must be some sort of fixed system; besides barracks and hospitals had accustomed him to such things.

The baby was fast asleep in a small cradle on the right side of the bed. His little nails were so tiny and so clean! Barnavaux looked from them to his own, which were all broken and black of course. This little living thing that owed its life to him made

him feel awkward somehow; thinking of a thing was a very different matter to seeing it; besides the things one imagined were very unlike the real ones. However, he kissed the baby and Louise.

"Was it all right?" he asked.

"I should think it was," answered Louise with much pride. "I'm my mother over again; she didn't take long over these things."

Her heart was full of a simple delight, not only in continuing her race, but in perpetuating some of its qualities. With a very wise look she went on:

"It's knack, you know, nothing else. There was a woman here ill for two days—simply awful!"

Then she gave us details of what she had gone through. Women like to speak of these things, as soldiers to relate their campaigns, and Louise derived great satisfaction from her recital, a satisfaction fully appreciated by Barnavaux.

He had brought along two oranges wrapped in tissue paper, and a mysterious object hidden in a little black cardboard box, bearing a Palaiseau jeweller's name on the cover.

"Here," he said shyly, "you said you wanted one for him so——"

She opened the box, full of the delighted haste with which women always examine trinkets, and drew out a coral necklace, at the end of which hung a little gold heart with a cross engraved on it.

"It is gold, isn't it?" she said, "real gold?"

"Yes," answered Barnavaux proudly, "shall I put it on him?"

With shining eyes, Louise assented, and Barnavaux lifted up the little wrinkled head.

"Don't hurt him," said Louise.

Oh, no! Barnavaux was not going to hurt him! He was full of care and gentleness, because the crimson pate and tiny neck certainly seemed to be very insecurely fixed on—and they belonged to him!

He let the beautiful gold heart lie on the baby's coverlet, pleased at the fine show it made. Louise had always wished for just such a trinket for her baby, and that had never surprised Barnavaux in the least; he had seen so many fetiches!

Suddenly a baby in one of the eighteen cradles began to whimper, and then set up a

wail that was as ugly as the cry of a cat. Then another began, and another, and another, till the whole lot of them were at it. It was painful to our unaccustomed ears.

"It's always the way," said Louise with a knowing air. "If one of the little mites begins to cry, all the others follow suit."

She began to feed the baby, which a nurse had put into her arms, and his cry stopped at once; wrapped in all his swaddling clothes he looked like a bottle being filled.

"He doesn't cost much to feed now," said Louise, "but he will later when he's weaned. I like nursing him—it's a funny thing how soothing it is. Lots of the women here won't hear of keeping their babies, specially if they don't know who the father is. They keep on with 'Take him away.' 'Take him to the Home!' The nurses don't say anything, but wait, and later, when the baby has begun to feed, they won't let it go. I can quite understand!"

. . . . . .

A week later, Louise returned to her room in the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Jacques, to have another week's rest, although that was quite unnecessary, she told me. When I say "rest," it was the word she used. She

refused the cab I offered to send for her, however, on the ground that it was too near her home, and that she had no "luggage." This latter argument somewhat disconcerted me.

As a matter of fact, it is a fixed principle in the world to which she belongs, that vehicles must only be used for the rapid transport of such heavy or unwieldy articles as the conductors refuse to take on the omnibuses.

As soon as she got home, she found so many things to do, and the baby was so exacting that I seldom saw her sitting down. She began to work at purses again, because she could do that at home.

Then I understood why she had started fresh work during the months before the birth of her son: she was free then to come and go as she liked, she could put a little by. Later, she knew she wouldn't be able to earn so much, because the baby would engross the whole of her time. All this had been foreseen by Louise, and her precautions had been taken quite naturally, without upsetting herself or others: every one knows that this is the proper way to do things.

In spite of the hard work and the restless

nights, Louise had developed a beauty hitherto unknown to me, a simple, touching, and perfect beauty. I remembered what Barnavaux had said, "When a woman has had a child, she has renewed herself." Painters, I think, must always have found it easy to impart that virginal appearance to their madonnas, for there must have been no lack of models at any time.

Louise very often used to take off all the baby's clothes, even during the day, and let him kick his little legs about, and rejoice in his freedom. Then you began to perceive that contraction of the muscles round the mouth, which is the smile of a very young baby. And Louise would gloat over his little naked body. Once I heard her murmur to herself, "To think I have accomplished all this!" She was amazed and filled with pride, as are most young mothers, at having brought into the world a being not wholly like herself—a man child. It seemed to her a wonder, a mystery.

In the early days Barnavaux used to contemplate his son with a puzzled countenance. The baby was his, or rather, it was of him. Naturally he hadn't Louise's convincing reason for accepting him.

Louise's acceptance of him was a physical one: the child was her own, as her limbs, or her body, or her thoughts were her own. It was different with Barnavaux. His acceptance of the child was mental; he acquiesced, but remained a little out of his element for some time. But by and by he became quite used to him, and was very contented; in justice to him, I must say he was always a good father.

At last they began to discuss the baptism. I knew there was sure to be a baptism some time or other, for, of all the Christian rites and ceremonies, this is the only one which the lower classes of Paris, and especially the women, will not dispense with. You can marry without the help of the Church, you can also die, rather more reluctantly, without her aid, but Louise would fear a terrible fate for her child, she would never be happy, unless holy water were sprinkled on his little brow, and already she had been to Saint-Jacques-du-Haut-Pas to obtain a blessing on Barnavaux's little gold heart that was now half buried in the soft flesh of the tiny neck.

So Pierre-César was to be baptised, and I was chosen to be the godfather.

"Very well," I said, "Pierre-César be it. Pierre-César what, though, Barnavaux?"

Louise blushed, and Barnavaux turned away so as not to meet my look.

"The name he was registered under," he said confusedly, "Pierre-César Collot."

It was Louise who saved the situation, and was again the braver and franker of the two.

"I get twenty sous a day as *fille-mère*, you see," she said, "so he mustn't acknowledge him; it wouldn't be wise."

"No," repeated Barnavaux, "it wouldn't be wise."

THE BAR

THE Café des Vosges, which is situated at one of the corners of the Rue de Sèvres, near the Institute for Blind Children, is a white, ancient-looking building, pleasant and hospitable to the eye. It was here I came across Barnavaux, seated in company with a big fair man dressed in white: the colonial costume in all its simplicity. The only thing wanting to complete it was a helmet.

I was not surprised to see this person here, for there is a *brasserie* near, much frequented by Colonials of a superior grade. Those who are lower down the social ladder patronise the Café des Vosges, especially since the Colonial Office has been transferred to the Rue Oudinot. There they meet Government clerks, men whom they envy and respect, believing them to exercise great influence.

I therefore imagined myself to be in the presence of a petty colonial official, who was wearing his old white clothes on account

of the heat, a proceeding of which I heartily approved. Barnavaux, however, undeceived me.

"This chap?" he said. "He's a cook in a restaurant here!"

As a matter of fact, no costume is so like the colonial one as that of a pastrycook in his professional dress. I apologised, but the fair man replied:

"Oh, it's all right. As a matter of fact, I am wearing my old West Coast rig-out. I shouldn't have known Barnavaux if I hadn't been out there with him. I've always been a cook, though, first in the army, and then with the Chargeurs Réunis, and afterwards with Monsieur Laresche, the consul at Rio Negro."

The sun was setting behind the church of Saint-François-Xavier, and the brilliant blue of the summer sky was tinged with green and salmon colour. It was a real Sahara sky, harsh and dusty, yet magnificent. A cooler wind was springing up, however, from the north-east, and the newspaper boys were beginning to cry their wares. I bought a paper as usual, and glanced at it. It related fresh difficulties with Germany about Morocco.

"We're going to funk it!" said Barnavaux. "We always do with the Prussians."

One of Barnavaux's failings is that he always will discuss everything. When he begins to hold forth on diplomatic questions, I do my utmost to ignore him: his opinions are exaggerated and his facts insufficient. But the big fair man struck in consequentially:

"It's all nonsense," he said, "all nonsense what they're playing at! They're in a hurry. Never hurry. That's the secret of true diplomacy."

Barnavaux began an elaborate explanation of the best way to tackle a European war. He was becoming quite unbearable, when the big fair man interrupted him again:

"It's impossible to talk about that sort of thing if you've never had anything to do with it. I know something about it because I was cook at the consul's. Very much the same thing as this Morocco business took place at Rio Negro, very much the same!"

The thing he was referring to was of ancient date. I could only remember it very vaguely, so I began to ask questions.

"Rio Negro," began the cook, "is a

Portuguese port on the Grain Coast. It is entirely surrounded by our possessions. However, a consul was sent there, and I will tell you why presently. At the end of each day, M. Laresche used to say, 'This is what comes of being a sailor and an explorer; the Quai d'Orsay always give me the worst posts they can find. They never care for a chap who's seen a little of life. What in the world is the good of sending me here! I can't even report on the trade of the place. I can't go on telling them that the Portuguese trade in nothing but postage stamps.'

"It would seem that the Portuguese were themselves of the opinion that this state of things wasn't exactly satisfactory, and they had entered upon negotiations with France to exchange the colony for something else, or to sell it. This was being discussed in Paris, of course, and M. Laresche had been sent out to show the great interest the French took in Rio Negro. They told him nothing of all this, however. He knew nothing of what was going on, and he hadn't a solitary thing to do.

"Sometimes he used to go out on the banks of the river at sunset, and shoot a *gueule-*

tapée, a sort of big lizard that is delicious to eat when served with *sauce tartare* as I used to dish it up; but Sarai, his *mousso*, a little Malinké, always refused to touch it, because, said she, she was a descendant of the *gueule-tapée*, and her principles forbade her to eat her grandfather unless it was absolutely necessary.

"After a time, however, Monsieur le consul got tired of bringing back game that his *mousso* wouldn't look at, so he gave me his gun, telling me to wrap a greasy rag round the lock, stop up the barrel, take it to pieces and put it away.

"Then he began writing a romance about his *mousso*. It said that she was nothing but a little savage, and that neither he nor anybody else would ever understand her, and that she played him false with the niggers. At the end of a fortnight he gave it up, saying it was too hot for that sort of thing, and besides the theme had already been rendered commonplace by other naval officers before him. Another excuse was that, as he was no longer in the navy, he had no right to write about such things.

"All this made him think of his old calling again. Just when I was beginning to think

he would go melancholy mad, he took up a new craze, and spent all his time on the sea in a rotten little native boat, with eight Kroumen for a crew. He called this 'making a chart of the Bar,' and he certainly sounded the depths, took notes, and drew up many plans in his study at night. Sometimes he took an involuntary header, of course!

"Do you know anything about a bar on the West Coast of Africa?" Barnavaux and I nodded, and he went on, "I can't think why there should be such a thing. People say it comes from the meeting of the river water with the waves from the open sea, but that can't be true, because you often find a bar where no river exists.

"The Kroumen alone know how to cross the bar; first they touch their mascots, then, watching the moment when the huge waves draw back, they ride over on the backs of them, first one wave, then another and another, as long as they last. The moment for doing this must be timed to a fraction, otherwise the boat will run aground and be smashed to atoms, and not only the boat, but the men's heads, sometimes.

"These Kroumen know their business well, but very often it is a difficult thing to

get them to start out at all. There are always any number of niggers to be had, but the Kroumen won't budge sometimes for weeks and months.

"Monsieur le consul declared that he intended to discover the why and the wherefore of the bar, so he questioned the Kroumen, made notes, and chatted to old Wilson, who had been a pilot once, and was now manager of the Verbeck factory.

"One day, a long telegram in cipher was handed him. Having no secretary, he deciphered it himself, and then stared in amazement. It was all about this exchange of colonies with the Portuguese, a transaction that had been started years ago, and might last to all eternity.

"Apparently the Germans had suddenly decided that it wouldn't do. Probably they wanted something for themselves: our provinces of Champagne or Burgundy, maybe, or the obelisk from the Place de la Concorde, or a free pass for the trams. Anyway, to draw attention to their decision, they sent the gunboat *Fafner* to Rio Negro.

"I wish you had seen Monsieur le consul! I'm sure he had never been in such a state of excitement since his first communion. A

man of war! a man of war was coming! Being a sailor, he didn't at first remember or care that she was a German. He fetched his—what's the name of the book where sailors find the names of all the war-ships in the world, with a picture of them and a description and all the rest of it?"

"Brassey's *Naval Annual?*" I suggested.

"That's it. When he had looked up the boat, he was simply disgusted. 'It's nothing but a saucepan,' he said, 'a dirty little saucepan!' Then his face changed. I never saw Napoleon—he didn't live in my time—but I've always felt convinced that when he saw victory ahead he must have looked like Monsieur le consul now. He pulled the little turned-up tail of hair at the back of Sarai's head—all Malinké women do their hair that way—and said: 'Here's promotion! Consul; first class consul; consul-general. Perhaps ambassador!'

"Sarai couldn't understand what he was driving at, but she said, 'Good!' I couldn't understand either, but the boss was pleased, and I was glad of it, for he was a good chap, not a bit stuck-up. He immediately drew up a long telegram in cipher, and awaited the *Fafner* with much impatience.

"He hadn't long to wait; three days later, the German ship was lying off Rio Negro. She fired a salute, to which the Portuguese replied with a regular cannonade, and a visit from the Portuguese Governor armed with stamps, for one must never let an opportunity slip. The German commander, Herr von What's-his-name, returned the visit, and there was a general fuss all round. The *Fafner was* a saucepan, just as Monsieur le consul had said. I wouldn't have boiled peas in her.

"I don't know what the French Government replied to the consul's report. He looked desperate when he received the reply and cried, 'What a lot of fools they are in Paris, utter fools! It's incredible after all that I've told them. I've got to shift! They're considering the question of my transference. I shall have to move on in January, if I'm not much mistaken, and they'll reduce my pay as well as recall me! Damned fools!'

"The Germans had received the order not to land, but they did so nevertheless, incog., of course, and a few at a time, to enjoy the feminine society of Rio Negro, a very right and proper thing to do. And they got

gloriously drunk, as was also very right and proper.

"Old Wilson, the English ex-pilot, who often came up to the Consulate of an evening in support of the *entente cordiale*, would sum up the situation in one word, 'Uneventful, sir!'

"After the visit of old Wilson, Monsieur le consul would begin his calculations anew, but with letters instead of ciphers, and I once heard him say, 'The fools! the fools! let them wait until the end of the year. I'm sure——"

"He would sometimes leave copies of his reports lying about. One morning I read, 'It is my duty to remind you, Monsieur le ministre that an eagre is a huge wave that, for a number of days in succession, breaks continuously upon the shore. It frequently occurs along the west coast of Africa, as well as on the coast of Morocco, between the months of November and May, and sometimes continues without interruption until the following January.

"'Report will have it that, during this time, no one can precisely define the exact situation of the bar. It may be well out to sea, or nearer the land, no one can be

sure where. If a ship be at anchor near land close to the shore, the eagre undermines the sand beneath, loosens the anchor, and the ship will probably be driven out to the open sea. If the anchor remains fast there is still a great deal of strain on the boat, and she must be in first-rate condition in order to resist it, otherwise her only recourse is to put out to sea. Another point to be noted is that the eagre only announces its approach by an extensive refraction of the air, which the uninitiated would not perceive, and a dead calm.'

"This, then, was the diplomatic correspondence of Monsieur le consul. It astonished me, although I did not understand it. The month of October was very fine, and that seemed to worry him—probably he found the heat very trying. But in November the weather changed and the wind from the sea grew much cooler. Then Monsieur le consul's face became as pink as that of a young girl.

"One morning he sought out the Kroumen. 'How about crossing the bar today?' he said. But the Kroumen wouldn't hear of such a thing, and he returned home, rubbing his hands with satisfaction.

"All that day, he stayed on the balcony looking out to sea. The water, as far as you could see, was thick with sand, and the *Fafner* was plunging forward every moment like a duck diving for a worm. 'If only they stick to their duty, *nom de Dieu!*' said Monsieur le consul. 'Don't forget, you dirty little boat, your orders were to stay where you are, not to go to sea!'

"He couldn't rest that evening after dinner. He went out instead, and brought back old Wilson, who sat and smoked many pipes with him. Monsieur le consul took down a book and began to read:

"'Oh! combien de marins, combien de capitaines . . .'

As Wilson only knew two or three words of French, he made no remark, but went on smoking and drinking whisky. I had gone to bed.

"Towards two in the morning, I heard the cannon thunder out; then again and again. I dressed like lightning, and went out. Monsieur le consul was saying, 'That's done it. I knew she couldn't hold out as soon as the eagre reached the bar. The *Fafner* is going to hell! She's going down!' 'She's leaky,' said Wilson. 'Of

course she's leaky, old chap. Three cheers for the bar! I was sure of it. I told them so.' Then recollecting himself, he called out, 'This won't do, we must go over to them.'

"Wilson was of the same opinion. We could see the rockets going up from the ship, and again and again the cannon roared for help. The Kroumen showed no enthusiasm at the idea of putting out to sea. 'Twenty piastres each!' said Monsieur le consul, 'a hundred francs then, you damned skunks!'

"At last they allowed themselves to be persuaded. Wilson pushed them along in front of him, and the eight of them started off with Monsieur le consul and the Englishman.

"It was a night too! And why they weren't all drowned I'm sure I can't think. It was a miracle, nothing else. An hour and a half later they returned, however. They had cast a line to the gunboat, and fixed up a cable and traversing buoy, and all the crew were saved, including Herr von What's-his-name.

"Monsieur le consul was drenched to the skin, but that did not prevent him from saying very politely to the German com-

mander, 'My house is at your service, monsieur,' and the German replied with much elegance in French, 'I can refuse you nothing, monsieur!'

"They drank another strong whisky, with hot water and sugar, and I made up a bed for the German. Then, after seeing that nothing was wanting to the comfort of his guest, Monsieur le consul returned to his study, and sent off a last report: 'As I had already warned your Excellency, it was quite impossible for a ship of the age and tonnage of the *Fafner* to resist the eagre, that makes the bar at Rio so dangerous at any time. I am happy, however, to be able to acquaint you with the fact that the crew is safe.'"

"Well," I asked, "is that all?"

"Of course, isn't it enough?" answered the cook. "Events had plainly shown that Rio Negro, as a port, did not come up to Marseilles, and the German boat had gone to the bottom. There was no more to be said."

"I say," I added, "is there a bar at Agadir?"

"Rather! I've crossed it in a cargo boat that was calling at the ports along the coast."

THE AVENGING OF WATERLOO

THE well-dressed Englishman was certainly causing a sensation on the Boulevard; and it was quite evident that he was very drunk, majestically, and yet whimsically drunk.

He had begun by engaging a cab; not that he experienced any difficulty in keeping on his legs, for he could walk perfectly straight, and carried his six feet of bone and muscle with a magnificent and unbending pride. It had merely occurred to him, I imagine, that a carriage would take him more quickly to a place where he could find still more champagne.

He had, however, reckoned without the marvellous activity of his own imagination. The Englishman delights in action; this much justice has been done him by most sociologists. Again, drunkenness develops the natural qualities of a man and carries them to excess. This Englishman was evidently of a generous and compassionate

nature, and besides he was feeling very warm. So he tried to cool himself by getting on the box, and at the same time, thinking the cabby must be tired of always doing the same thing, he politely invited him to get inside the carriage while he drove. It would be a change for them both, he thought, and the cabby, after receiving a big tip, acquiesced.

Nothing is more remarkable than the sensitiveness of horses long accustomed to the bit and bridle. It really seemed like a kind of telepathy in this case, for as soon as the Englishman had taken hold of the reins the horse began to stagger about as if he were drunk. He executed the most curious evolutions on the wood-paving, taking first one direction and then another. The Englishman could not understand why, but his heart was filled with pity. From this extraordinary behaviour, he gathered that the poor horse was tired, much more tired even than the cabby, and he had thought of the man before thinking of the beast! He made up his mind to atone for this injustice.

It was at this point in the proceedings that Barnavaux and I caught sight of him.

Having unharnessed the animal with a celerity that proved a real knowledge of horses, he was doing his best to make him get inside the carriage. The horse refused point-blank. No doubt he thought it wasn't big enough for him, and, I feel convinced, he also had a proper regard for appearances, and had made up his mind to remain in his appointed place; in fact, he looked quite shocked.

The cabby looked shocked, too. He had had about enough of his fare, and probably said so in no very measured language, for the next moment the Englishman had indisputably proved his decided superiority in the art of boxing.

The result of this was a sudden upheaval of national indignation among the onlookers. Overwhelmed by numbers, the Englishman struggled desperately for a few moments, and was only saved from real hurt by the arrival of the police.

What astonished me most was Barnavaux's indifference to what was going on, an indifference that did not seem at all like him. Barnavaux has a love of fair play, in matters of combat, at any rate, and his indulgent attitude towards those who lack the virtue of abstemiousness is accounted

for by the memory of personal experience in such matters, and also the principle that people who live in glass houses should not throw stones. He also loves any display of skill. In spite of all this, he looked contemptuously at the misfortunes of this Englishman, whose pluck and drunken frenzy were taking him to the police station.

I reproached him severely with this indifference; it didn't seem worthy of him.

"He's an Englishman," said Barnavaux curtly. "I don't like them."

"Come, Barnavaux!" I protested, "they are our friends, almost our allies. Don't carry personal feeling into politics!"

"I'm not," answered Barnavaux, "but English people make me sick. They won't let other people do the things they do themselves. They can understand no people but their own, and can excuse none except themselves. They can do as they like, but other people must behave properly. It's not fair! Once poor old Barbier——"

I dived into my memory,

"Barbier, the one that was at Libreville?"

"He was at Libreville," answered Barna-

THE ENGLISHMAN STRUGGLED DESPERATELY FOR A FEW MINUTES

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vaux, "and afterwards they sent him to Obock, where he had a stroke of bad luck. But, all the same, you do remember him. He was a good sort! I can see him now, with his long beard. He always used to carry a piece of pipeclay in his pocket, and clean his helmet and canvas shoes as soon as he saw a speck on them, and a little bit of chamois leather to polish up his buttons. He was a true soldier, you know, though only an engineer, and at the same time he was employed officially.

"I wish you could have seen his handwriting! It was like copper-plate; and, when he made a capital letter, he used to make a feint with his pen like a fencing master attacking in sixte. Well, he was chosen for Obock."

"But Obock is deserted now," I remarked. "At least twenty years ago the Government decided that Obock was a great mistake as a port, both economically and geographically, and gave the preference to Djibouti."

"Well, that's just why old Barbier was sent there," continued Barnavaux. "They had made quite a big place of Obock. There was a Governor's palace, a hospital, a great barracks of a place for the Governor's

offices, a prison, everything to make a colony happy and prosperous, and there were four palm-trees that had to be watered continually; luxuriant vegetation is not a feature of the place.

"When they left Obock for Djibouti, they took away all they could lay hands on: the beds from the hospital, the windows and doors from the palace and other houses, and even a cannon doorstop. National principles have to be rigidly adhered to, you see, one of them being that, when the French flag has once floated in any part of the globe, it must continue to do so; so old Barbier was put in charge of the flag.

"That was all he had to do, that, and to water the ever-thirsty palms. He was quite alone too, absolutely alone; not a white man with him, nothing but Somali soldiers and Ascaris, who from birth have the faces of old men. I think it must be the sun that makes them look like that, and no wonder, for it's the hottest place in the world!

"However, Barbier ended by making soldiers of them. He drilled them into strict obedience at a word or look, and occasionally he would head an expedition across the desert in pursuit of an imaginary

enemy, the while he discoursed to them of the strategy of Napoleon I, and the duty of every man to sacrifice his life for France.

"This may surprise you, but the fact is that old Barbier had gone clean mad. Probably the heat had a good deal to do with it, but the loneliness had still more, the being alone with no civilised person to speak to. He had got the idea into his head that he was Governor-General of the desert, and responsible to no one for his actions, except of course, to the Government and the Colonial Office inspector.

"That is why the inspectors never noticed he was off his head when they passed through the place. He was always very polite to them, and gave them dinner with an extra bottle of wine from the storehouse. When they had gone, however, he would replace the bottle with this inscription written in his beautiful handwriting, 'Bottle left in this condition by M. l'inspecteur,' for, in his opinion, a good financial position was only maintained by scrupulous attention to such matters.

"He took great interest, too, in the extension of the Colonies, and had projects for reclaiming the deserts. But in all his

schemes he remained very simple, and, compared with most men of his kind, he was not at all ambitious for himself.

"All this went on without interruption until the day when, instead of an Inspector, an Englishman turned up. He was a very rich man travelling on his yacht, going, I think, across the Red Sea to India, and he suddenly took it into his head to have a look at Obock.

"Old Barbier was deferential to the inspectors, as I told you, but with an Englishman, who was not even an official of any kind, he was merely the Governor of the Desert, affable, but—but—what's the word when people put on airs?"

"Patronising?" I suggested.

"Yes, patronising. He went down to meet the Englishman, who had sent word of his intention to land, and received him on the little wooden quay. The wood was rotten in places, but that was hardly noticeable because of the oysters that covered the rafters.

"Barbier had put on his cloth uniform, with the thermometer at 120 in the shade, and his Ascaris presented arms. The Englishman held out his hand, but Barbier

kept his close to his sides in the correct position, then saluted and cried, 'Shoulder arms!'

"The Ascaris obeyed, and the Englishman looked flattered: this was a right royal reception indeed! When he asked, however, if he might visit the town, old Barbier said that was impossible on account of political reasons. The Englishman was surprised, but had no time to get annoyed, for Barbier, with another salute, said, 'Milord, France has the honour of inviting you to dinner!'

"The dinner was great. Old Barbier had prepared the menu, and written it out himself, and each dish was brought to the table by his 'boy,' accompanied by four Ascaris, fully armed and with fixed bayonets.

"When the 'boy' placed a dish on the table, the Ascaris presented arms, and an Ascari trumpeter, stationed outside, blew a blast on his trumpet every time the old fellow clinked glasses with the Englishman, saying, 'I drink to the health of your lady, milord.'

"The Englishman had sent for a case of his own champagne, but old Barbier refused it, explaining that he could not accept

anything, for fear of being accused of bribery, but that they would drink as much French champagne as the Englishman liked, provided he would sign the register provided for 'occasional visitors, unnaturalised foreigners and shipwrecked persons.' The Englishman signed the register under the impression that his autograph had been asked of him. At midnight, he got up to go, but old Barbier cried out, 'So you think you're going off like that, milord! Not so fast!'

"The Englishman, thinking there was something to pay, asked the amount. 'There's nothing to pay,' answered old Barbier, 'but I mean to avenge Waterloo!' Of course the Englishman was completely nonplussed, but, turning to the boy, the four Ascaris and the trumpeter, the old chap cried, 'Guards! take this man to prison!'

"The Englishman was taken to prison," finished Barnavaux, "and, if he had been the one to do as old Barbier did, he would have considered it a very good joke. But, instead of that, he declared that British dignity had been outraged. He complained to his Consul, and wrote to the papers about

the affair, and old Barbier was cashiered. As soon as he was in France again, however, he became quite normal, he spoke and thought as other people did; and, when he swore he could remember nothing of the whole business, no one would understand that for the time being he had been mad. No one would believe him. That's why I don't pity Englishmen when they are drunk. They don't play fair towards us. They're an uncharitable people!"

PAPA-LE-PETIT-GARÇON

BARNAVAUX has long held the opinion that men are not descended from the monkeys, but, when I ask him on what grounds he rejects a hypothesis so dear to these people who are inclined to materialism, he always answers:

"What's my reason? Why simply that it's not true, that's all!"

Barnavaux is always so cocksure. And nothing, to my mind, is so exasperating as a person who always thinks himself infallible! So I said to him the other day:

"It's only an opinion of your own, Barnavaux; and what's your opinion worth?"

"I tell you men are not descended from the monkeys," he insisted.

"Why not? Tell me why not, Barnavaux?"

"Because in the first place nobody knows anything about it and—and—perhaps they are descended from quite another sort of animal."

I couldn't get him to say another word on the subject; but the more I questioned him, the more firmly was I convinced that his reticence arose from his own ignorance of the subject. He had imbibed the ideas of another, but was still in some doubt as to their absolute accuracy. He knew that there was "something"—something mysterious and puzzling, even incredible, and yet so striking, so novel and charming, that if he could not possibly accept it he was yet loath to accept any other idea in its stead. But what was it? What could it be? When I asked him, he changed the subject, until one day he came to me of his own accord and said:

"I say, the man who knows all about that business you're so keen on is in Paris now. Would you like to see him?"

There was no need for me to answer; all I said was:

"Where's the best place for me to meet him? At my house, or some café, or shall we go to the wine-shop?"

I consulted Barnavaux, because, as regards tact and a nice perception of what is suitable, no diplomatist can equal him in his own special way. He knows exactly where

to take the people he introduces to me, so that both they and myself shall feel at our ease. To my surprise he answered:

"Frenchy has got a little money just now, and he's quite well dressed. He told me he'd call for you in his car, one that he's hiring by the month. And he wanted to take you to some nice place to dine, to Montmartre, for instance; he loves Montmartre. But I told him that was out of the question because I should have to go in uniform, so he said he'd take us somewhere in the country for a little dinner."

"So you've got rich friends now, Barnavaux," I said.

"I haven't got any rich friends," he protested. "I never said Frenchy was rich. I said he had some money just now, and that's a very different matter."

I've known Barnavaux so long that I flattered myself I could guess the calling of the man I was to meet, a man who wasn't rich but who had "a little money just now." No doubt he was a comrade from the Legion, German, English, Russian or Hungarian, of good family, who had joined a foreign regiment for reasons no one would ever know.

"That's it, isn't it?" I asked, proud of my penetration.

"No," answered Barnavaux, shrugging his shoulders.

"Well, what is he then? I must know if I'm going to meet him."

"Oh, Frenchy is a gold prospector," answered Barnavaux.

. . . . . .

And so I made the acquaintance of Frenchy, and during the few weeks that elapsed before he had finished the spending of the 75,000 francs he had made at the gold diggings in Madagascar, he and I were often together. His car was the only luxury he apparently indulged in; it was a 30-40 h.p., powerful and springy, like those hired by the American millionaires.

From this fine carriage would descend a small thin man, with a yellow skin, and eyes much dilated with fever and absinth, and dressed like a workman in his Sunday best, all in black, with a cut-away waistcoat over a white shirt, a low collar and a black cravat tied in a butterfly bow with straggling ends.

He was suffering from having lived too long alone sifting gold along the river banks.

When I say "suffering" I mean that, unlike other civilised men, he did not mind remaining absolutely silent.

For hours and hours he would be dumb, quite satisfied to eat and drink, or even to be just sitting down, doing nothing, neither walking nor working. Women didn't interest him much; not that he was naturally averse to their society, but "I've lost the habit," he said shyly to me.

Barnavaux had the greatest respect for him. He admired a man, who, uneducated as he was, had been able to lift himself out of the rut, without looking to anyone for guidance, and having only himself to rely upon, even in savage countries.

It was not easy to get him to talk, you had to wait till he was that way inclined; but one day he began quite of his own accord.

"Yes," he said, "it was when I was prospecting for gold in Madagascar, in the great forests to the east of the island, just where they descend towards the Betsimisarake country. You wonder that I am so silent, but how could I be otherwise? For months and months I travelled alone through those endless woods. When I was following the course of a river, the foliage would meet

low over my head till I felt stifled. To advance a single step, I had to strike ten blows with my hatchet, cutting through great stems, from which sap would gush out as water from a tap.

"I went through what were like tunnels of greenery, and the heat was intense and humid, just as in a real tunnel; it smelt of mud and decay, of crushed and dying plants. As I cut my way through the bushes, all around me I heard strange sounds which filled me with unreasoning fear: sounds like pieces of satin being hastily torn.

"After a time I understood what it was, It was the sound of snakes gliding swiftly away at my approach. They were great black and green snakes, but they were not dangerous, and those I didn't disturb would remain coiled so tightly about the branches that, but for their long heads and sparkling eyes, they might easily have passed for enormous slugs.

"Such a mistake would have been quite excusable, for there are very big slugs out there that climb the trees, leaving a shining track behind them, or go to sleep among the branches like limpets on a rock. One evening I threw some of them by accident

on my fire; and I thought I would see what they tasted like. As they were rather nice, I sometimes used to make a meal of them, and was in the habit of gathering them under the big trees that grew on the hills.

"It was easier to get along there, as the tops of the trees grew so closely together that the undergrowth could not grow so high, I think, as in other places.

"While gathering the slugs I could hear sounds all about me like weeping. Yes, like weeping! though really it was a shrill cry on three notes horribly weird to hear. You might have been frightened had you been there, but I knew what it was, only the *babakoutes* running away from me.

"*Babakoutes* are not exactly monkeys; they're more like great squirrels, with hands, real hands, and flatter and much more human faces than a squirrel's. *Babakoute* is Malagasy, and means 'papa-le-petit-garçon,' and the Betsimisarakes say they are descended from them. They say that, very long ago, their race sprang from a pair of the great creatures, which one can so rarely see, high among the tree-tops as they are, and yet you can hear from so great a distance.

"When I had collected a good many slugs it was my habit to put them in an empty tin, well away from the fire, and leave them to soak through the night. Then I would go quietly to sleep: there's not a single beast of prey in the whole of Madagascar, and the natives are such cowards!

"However, one morning I noticed that my tin was empty: I had been robbed in the night! A second and third time the same thing happened. I resolved to clear the matter up; so on the fourth night, when I saw a human shape bending over my tin of slugs, I fired a charge of small shot at it. But I had fired at close range, and no doubt my game was easily disabled; I saw it fall, and I heard it groaning and crying. Going up to it, I found—it's not easy to say what, but a creature neither man nor monkey, a very large *babakoute* if you like.

"These animals are hard to get at, as I said before, but I had often shot them, and this one was very different from any I had ever seen as yet. It was much bigger, to begin with, about the size of a girl of fourteen or fifteen. I say a girl, because it was a female, but also because of the face,

which looked human and yet belonged to an animal.

"You know how often people say of a dog 'How human he looks!' Well, this creature was like that. Her eyes may have had something to do with it; they were big and set in the front of the face, not at the side like an animal's, and they were tender, pleading and unhappy, yes, just like the eyes of a little girl!

"I took this beast-woman in my arms, without any resistance on her part, and bathed her thigh, that was all peppered with tiny wounds where the shot had struck her. She was covered with white fur, that had longer black hairs on the breast and head. I was glad when I saw the fur. 'Why, after all,' I thought, 'she's only an animal!'

"But suddenly she put her arms round my neck, weeping gently all the time, just like a woman. Only a woman could have asked for protection in that way, and I didn't know what to do at all.

"There were other *babakoutes* calling in the forest, but she did not heed them, she kept on gazing at me, only at me, mind you, who had just shot her!

"Ah, what coaxing ways she had! That's

why I once told Barnavaux that we are not descended from the monkeys, but from creatures like her. Monkeys are malicious, bad-tempered, and incapable of remembering the smallest thing; they are dirty, and have the beastliest habits, you know that as well as I do. To see a monkey make love would be to take a life-long dislike to love.

"But she was good, through and through, just like a human being, for, after all, if you come to think of it, human beings are good really, or they wouldn't be where they are to-day. If they were bad, their intelligence and knowledge would make devils of them; yes, devils! it is so much more to their interest to be devils, but they simply can't, and that's the long and short of it!

"When a man lives all alone, as I did then, with no one near to argue with him, to keep him up to things, to make fun of him and call him silly, and, above all, to force him to state his thoughts precisely in so many words, his thoughts turn into dreams.

"He doesn't consider whether this or that is possible, so long as the thought of it is pleasant. And it pleased me to imagine that amongst these *babakoutes*, with their

feet, their hands, their half-human faces, there had been some who had turned out badly, and become monkeys, and others who had gradually advanced and at last had become that which lies dormant in them —human beings.

"I liked the notion, you see, and sometimes would call the creature 'little girl,' but generally 'grandmother.'

"Her wounds kept her quiet for a few days, no doubt that is why she got accustomed to me. When she got well, she sometimes went off to a distance, but she always turned up again. I would find her close beside me before the dawn.

"As soon as the sun began to shine, she would jump on a rock and gaze at the great glowing ball, making queer little signs and movements all the time. Perhaps to thank it for coming again, or because she felt awed by it, or maybe, she was glad to think of the new day before her. I can't say, I'm sure, but upon my word she looked as though she were praying; the expression of her face was so serious, and she seemed unhappy because I did not do the same, as though afraid that my ingratitude would bring us bad luck.

"She understood things too; she didn't really imitate as the monkeys do. One night I was down with fever, and was shivering, so she crept close to me, and tried to keep me warm. Any animal would do that, of course, but I kept on shivering, so she got up and threw some wood on the fire. Now isn't that human? Doesn't that mean intelligence? Would any monkey have done such a thing?

"I remember, too, she used to play with the fragments of gold I picked up, as though she loved their beauty.

"I forget how many days things went on in this way. All I know is that I had been washing gold in the forest many days, and progressing very slowly, until one day, I saw fields of rice and maize and a Betsimisarake village, called Ampasimbé.

"I was overjoyed at coming to a village again, because of the fowls and rice, the rum, and the women. When we reached the edge of the forest, the beast-woman caught hold of my hand. I knew she meant to say, 'Don't go there!' but of course I went all the same.

"Then she turned back into the forest, and for the first time I heard her cry like

the other *babakoutes*, with three wailing notes. It hurt me at first, but in a moment I thought no more of it.

"I gave piastres to the people of Ampasimbé—they don't know gold—and they opened a barrel of rum, and killed an ox, and feasted and drank in my honour. I also drank my fill.

"They had hung flowers over their ears, as they always do at times of rejoicing, the flowers of a sort of orange-tree much larger than our oaks; they have an odour even more intoxicating than the rum.

"When I had drunk enough, I went to my hut, not alone, of course. When a stranger visits them, these people always give him a woman. It is a custom of theirs, and one cannot refuse; it would be like refusing holy water at a funeral.

"Just towards dawn, when the stars begin to fade, I heard a scratching at my door. 'Rasoa, what's that? Iza aty vé, Rasoa. Go and see.' She opened the door quietly. 'It's nothing, Rafrenchy; only some one running away!' But away in the distance I heard the *babakoute* weeping.

"For many nights afterwards the beast-

woman came scratching at my door, and then fled without daring to enter. The Betsimisarakes were alarmed, thinking it a bad sign for an ancestor to return and haunt them. They thought that was why one of their dogs went suddenly mad. He rushed off, foaming at the mouth, and I said he must be killed at once, as well as any other dogs he had bitten. But we were too late to stop him, and he made off in the direction where there was no water.

"From that time on, I was obsessed by one idea, 'The beast-woman will be bitten; I must prevent it!' and I went and hid myself near the path by which I had reached the village; she would surely pass that way again. But I was powerless to prevent what followed. I heard her cries again, and then a terrified shriek—the dog was upon her!

"Not daring to fire, I killed the brute with the butt end of my rifle, and, as she was so frightened of fields and houses, I stayed in the forest to look after her.

"I did all I could; I lit fire, heated the ramrod of my gun, and put the red-hot iron on the bite. Then I felt once more the thin caressing arms around my neck, but for the last time.

"I watched her die, and saw her turn into a beast altogether, she showed her teeth, and snarled.

"I buried her as though she had been a woman, a Christian woman; but it was a monkey I buried, only a monkey. The madness had transformed her into a beast once more!"

FOUR DAYS

POOR Louise's child died on a sunny day near the end of March. I took a bunch of those white flowers they call snowballs and put them on his cradle; and the neighbours, poor as they were, brought flowers too: white lilac, white violets, and snowdrops. They completely covered the coarse clean sheet, and hid from view the poor little exhausted body, worn as it was to a mere shadow.

The tiny frame, in which the bones had scarcely formed, had struggled and fought against the inevitable, until the flesh was almost consumed, and life, in its unwillingness to yield the victory, had devoured it from within little by little, as a worm devours fruit.

Beneath the flowers, nothing could be seen save the domed and furrowed brow, the dark hollows of the fast-closed eyes, and the features, drawn like those of an old man.

It is at such moments, alas, when life

has departed, that one is best able to trace a resemblance, and this shrivelled scrap of a face was horribly like the face of Barnavaux when he was down with fever at the Val-de-Grâce, the day that he said "I strike you as devilish old."

Louise covered the dreadful little thing with kisses, and spoke of it with the utmost tenderness, doing her best to ennoble it, to make the memory of it more beautiful. Perhaps all this helped her the better to bear her sorrow.

When people inquired of what the baby died—people always do ask this useless question—she answered, "He just faded away like a little bird." Like a little bird! I can think of nothing but the wizened little creature, with its frowning look and puckered brow, of the pain-laden eyes that seemed to recognise and to dread the inevitable, and of all the sordid details of infantile disease. But to Louise all such things were blotted out, she ignored them; she could only see the child she had so dearly loved: a part, the most precious part of herself.

Barnavaux was with her the night the baby was dying, and when he left to return

to Palaiseau, they told him he would never see his child again. So the telegram that I sent him the next morning was no surprise: he guessed the contents beforehand.

His captain, who had been out inspecting the instruction of the new recruits, entered the courtyard just as the telegram arrived, and Barnavaux held it out to him.

Barnavaux is a soldier, and an old soldier at that. After saluting, he instinctively stood at attention; it required no effect on his part. Besides, at the moment he did not feel much grief. Like all men receiving tidings of a misfortune that has happened in their absence, and out of their sight, he could not grasp the fact, because he had not witnessed it. There seemed but little difference between a baby dying and a baby dead.

The captain understood things quicker than he; he had been brought up differently, and perhaps his feelings were a little more sensitive.

"Your child is dead? You want leave to attend the funeral? Do you know when it is to be. Well, you can take four days. The Commandant must sign your paper, but I give you permission to go at once, and

I will see that it is all right." Then he added in another tone, "you must bear up bravely, like a soldier."

It was a word of sympathy, and Barnavaux accepted it as such. He also understood that the captain had finished with him, and that he was dismissed. He saluted, and wheeled sharply round, then made off to prepare for his departure.

His comrades heard what had befallen him, and some of them said, "Poor old chap," others, "So Louise's baby is dead," while some of them doubtless thought it a good riddance for Barnavaux. The general wish, however, was to behave with decency and as though the affair were of interest to them, which it most certainly was not.

Out of doors, a south wind that breathed of spring was blowing; and that was really what they were all thinking about unconsciously: it filled them with a desire to enjoy the beauty of the day.

Barnavaux himself was taken aback by all this colour and light, and the brightness of the bursting buds; it distracted and worried him. Louise thought of nothing but her little dead child; Barnavaux of nothing but Louise. He was grieved for her, but

could not help thinking what a pity it had happened on such a beautiful day. It was not that he was heartless, but he had a strong active body, which could not help being alive, and shrinking instinctively from trouble. He was permeated with the beauty of the spring day, but an irresistible power drew him to the place where Louise was mourning—he could not keep away.

While Barnavaux was on his way to Paris, Captain Merle went to the Commandant de Bienne.

"I've taken the responsibility, sir, of granting Barnavaux four days' leave," he said. "His child is to be buried."

"Very well," said the Commandant, "you've done quite right." Then a second thought struck him. "But Barnavaux, I've never heard that he was married. Look him up in the roll of his company. You cannot find anything. What child is this then?"

"Perhaps he's not married," answered Captain Merle, "but that doesn't prevent ——"

"Doesn't prevent him from having a child? Of course not. But it is sufficient to make us ignore the existence of the child. Every

man in the company might come to us with the same tale. It's bad enough to have to make so many exceptions in the case of the married man; it upsets the routine; there must be a limit somewhere."

"I promised him four days' leave," said Captain Merle, "I thought—— Of course it's my fault."

"I'll sign his paper, but he has obtained it under false pretences. Come to me again when he returns."

Barnavaux, however, knew nothing of all this; he was in Paris with Louise, who wept more bitterly than ever when he arrived.

She was waiting to relieve her mind of some of those dreadful, morbid thoughts that her grief forced upon her. Nothing was worth while now, nothing was any good, neither her courage in bearing the little creature, nor her heroic struggles, nor the miseries of the nine months of waiting, nor the agonies at birth. She said all this, railing at fate.

Barnavaux considered it unjust too. He was not aghast at the death; he had seen too many die for that, and the child was only a baby, hardly human yet, although his own flesh and blood.

Children ought not to die, however. He thought with Louise in this, but applied it to all children. He felt a great pity for her, a natural sympathy that brought the tears to his eyes, though only commonplace phrases came to his lips.

"You mustn't make yourself ill, Louise; we did all we could, didn't we? We couldn't prevent it." Then, suddenly, "Poor little mother! Poor little mother!"

And Louise, whom the little, silent, toothless mouth would never call by this name, and who would perhaps never be called "Mother" by any little child, wept more bitterly, but at the same time with a sweet feeling of comfort.

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The funeral of a baby entails no great ceremony. Only one man was sent by the undertaker to carry the little coffin. Louise had sought the blessing of the Church upon the tiny body before letting them take it away. She couldn't have rested otherwise; she would have felt that some dreadful fate would overtake him and possibly her also.

A bored priest arrived, muttered a few words, and took his departure. Even so,

however, it was a charm against unknown evil and it satisfied her.

The undertaker's man threw a white cloth over the little coffin and picked it up in one hand; in the other he held an artificial wreath "presented by the firm," Barnavaux and I gathered up the remainder. Two neighbours, old women with nothing to do, accompanied us, and also Louise's stepmother. Barnavaux was very grateful to her for coming.

A little later nothing remained but a tiny heap of tossed-up earth in the common burial ground.

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After the funeral Barnavaux stayed two days in Paris, and early each morning, before I was up even, he presented himself at my door. Like all old soldiers, he felt the absolute need of occupation, and the want of some one to order him about. He tried to find something to do; he cleaned my gun, and polished up some old weapons brought from abroad; and as he knew the origin of each he strove to talk of them, and of the lands from which they came. His thoughts took the form of mental pictures and to prolong them he played with the

A BORED PRIEST ARRIVED

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relics like a child. He wanted to discover the Barnavaux of years gone by. Suddenly he stopped, sick at heart, and explained:

"I feel like a man with no appetite trying to force himself to eat. It hurts me to remember things!"

Then he began to wander round and round my room as a dog does when his master is moving, and he cannot find his special mat to lie down upon. He began all sorts of tasks and finished none, and the little he did was badly done. Being a good judge of how such things should be done, he despised himself for his weakness and said he was off to get a drink.

I don't always like Barnavaux to start drinking, that is why I purposely refrained from offering him anything. It was no good, however; he picked up his cap, and fidgeted for a moment or two, then he opened the door softly, and went out without saying good-bye. This was a proof that he intended coming back, for he is naturally polite. Polite in the peculiar manner of modern Frenchmen, who consider themselves free, or at least practically free, from convention; who indulge in bad language, intemperance, and nasty jokes, and yet

retain their intellectuality and finer feeling. Who can say whither all this tends, whether to the bettering or detriment of the race!

Barnavaux soon returned, a little more comprehensible to himself, and more irritating both to himself and me, because the cause of his terrible ennui had just begun to dawn upon him. I didn't wish to witness all the different phases! I need a certain amount of quiet each day, and what free time I have has to be divided among a large number of people! I began to feel cruel.

"Why don't you stay with Louise, Barnavaux?" I said. "Your leave is nearly up."

He looked at me, and answered without evasion:

"It gets on my nerves. I simply can't. I love her better now than I ever did before, that I'll swear. When I'm alone, and begin to think about her and her trouble, and of all the rest of it, it hurts me so much, and her suffering seems so much a part of myself, that I have to try to tell her about it. And when I do tell her, she doesn't answer my train of thought. She doesn't even think the same thoughts, nor feel the same, even

when we are talking about the self-same things.

"At the moment when you are most happy or most unhappy with the woman you love and who loves you, even when she is the mother of the child you have lost for ever, and when you are both mourning him, it is at such a moment that you find yourself most lonely. It is because your mind goes its own way which is never that of another. It's the truth that I'm telling you. It is impossible to prevent it. Nothing can be done."

While he was speaking I saw Louise, poor deserted Louise.

"Then," I said, "is it all over?"

"What?" he said, astonished. "Is what all over?"

"Louise."

"Over? No. Why? I can think of no one but her. The only thing is we must not meet until we are ourselves again. There will always be plenty that we alone can share, and that will make us hang together."

. . . . . .

Barnavaux returned to the barracks on Thursday night. Louise went to the station

to see him off, and I took train with him as far as Palaiseau. It was a moonlight night, and as we sped along, the country at intervals was white with flowering apple trees and pink-hued cherry blossom, a perfume sensuous, elusive and delicious was wafted from these leafless buds.

"What a beautiful country it is," said Barnavaux, "so rich and with everything where it ought to be, arranged by man for his own convenience; it's a country you can understand. In uncivilised countries you can't understand the meaning of things; France is a good country to live in."

I was touched by this remark of his; I knew that it was Barnavaux's intention to stay. He wasn't a blackguard; he had never thought of deserting Louise now that the child was dead, as so many other men would have done in his place. It would have been the easiest thing in the world. All he had to say was, "It's my turn for the Colonies. I'm off, good-bye!" and the two years with Louise would only have been another incident among the others, an incident of longer duration, perhaps, a sadder, yet in spite of all, a better experience. I was glad to see that old Barnavaux was a

good fellow, and meant to take the braver and more honest course.

It must have been sheer perversity on my part that made me give voice to the thought that was trembling on my lips; my only excuse was that I knew Barnavaux always made up his mind alone, and that once he had come to a decision, no one could alter it.

"Barnavaux," I said, "do you remember you told me at Tourane that it was impossible to live in France because there were no blacks there to work for you?"

I quite thought he would reply that he had changed because of all the things that had happened in the meanwhile, and that now he loved some one to whom he owed a duty. I had forgotten his natural reticence.

Frenchmen like to discuss matters of sentiment, but not personal ones. They are willing to speak of them at the theatre or a café-concert, anywhere, in fact, where they appear to be discussing not themselves but others, but it is very rare for them to allow the conversation to become personal. He answered, however:

"No one to work for me indeed! I've got Louise."

In Louise he had discovered the housekeeper, the servant, the wife, the tradition handed down to him by his ancestors, and it had changed his outlook on life. It was right, excellent, and had a beauty of its own, but it was not a thing to be discussed.

He enlarged on his plans, the practical side of them. His conduct had been exemplary since he had joined again—a record indeed! He would soon win back his stripes and be made a sergeant once more, and this time he would remain one. Then, when he left the army he'd get a snug little Government appointment. Perhaps even now, if I would speak to my friends about him, he might have a chance of being taken on as an orderly at the Colonial Department. After that he might get into some office, and last of all be made a commissionaire. Ambition could go no higher. And perhaps, after a time, when he'd put a little money by, he might go and live in the country—at Clamart, for instance.

"With Louise?"

"Well, of course," he said, looking very surprised at my question. "Who, if not Louise? I'm twenty years older than she

is, and I shall never get anyone like her again. She'll have her own little home one of these days when I'm——"

This was proof positive that Barnavaux looked upon Louise as his very own: he was even planning for her comfort after he'd left her for ever! She would probably end by getting him to marry her, in church, too, most likely, because it would sound so much better!

I left him on his way to the fort.

"You won't forget," he said gravely.

"Forget what?"

"To mention that orderly's place at the Colonial Department and all the rest of it, that I'm a sergeant, or as good as one, and a steady well-conducted fellow."

"*Bon Dieu*, Barnavaux," I ejaculated, "all this is making a different man of you. But you may be sure I will do what I can."

. . . . . .

Barnavaux was glad to get to his quarters again; it seemed like second nature to him now. The next morning, while he was instructing the new recruits in the profession of arms, Captain Merle called him up during a pause in the proceedings.

"Did you go to your child's funeral?"

"Yes, *mon capitaine.*"

"Are you married?"

"No, *mon capitaine.*"

"Had you acknowledged the child?"

"No, *mon capitaine.*"

"You have acted wrongly, Barnavaux. What have you to say? Nothing? It's better to say nothing."

In the wrong! He had acted wrongly! What did the fellow mean? He honestly tried his best to find the answer, but in vain, and the day slipped by, quiet and uneventful.

The next morning after drill, and before breakfast, the company formed up to listen to the reading of the report, followed by the distribution of the letters brought by the baggage-master. Barnavaux didn't expect any letters and he had long given up listening to the report; he knew it all by heart. Saturday, to-day, kit inspection. A beastly nuisance. Suddenly he heard his name; his name was on the list.

He strained his ears to hear what followed.

"Private Barnavaux, four days' cells by order of the Commandant de Bienne, commanding the detachment of 3rd Colonial Infantry stationed at Palaiseau"—all eyes

were turned upon him. He drew himself up—"for taking advantage of the Captain commanding the 3rd Company, by asking and obtaining leave to attend the funeral of his son, the said son being only an illegitimate child."

. . . . . .

No one dared look at him when he went to his room to fetch his old cloak, before following the corporal of the fatigue party who conducted him to the cells, and none of those who brought his food dared speak to him. He wasn't accepting this punishment as he had taken all the others that he had incurred during his long service, that is, with the carelessness of a man who does not mind paying the price, and who, if it pleases him, is ready to do the same again.

And he, Barnavaux, did pack drill in the company of the conscripts he despised, and of the dare-devils with whom he would no longer associate. He swept the paving stone in the yard, he, the old soldier, exempt from all *corvées*. His world had indeed fallen to pieces.

His old comrade, Müller, brought me the news. As soon as I knew he was free to go out again, I went to meet him. He looked

pale as he came towards me, his teeth were clenched, and his face wore a desperate look. We walked in silence for some time along the paved roadway leading up to Verrières.

"It's all up," he said at last, "I shall never be a sergeant now. It's fate; I shall never be any good. When I leave this cursed place, I shan't have a sou to my name, and no work that I can turn my hand to. You can tell Louise it's no good thinking of me. What shall I do when my time's up? Tell her I'll go my way, and she must go hers, and we'll have done with all this humbug!"

I did my best to console him, and there was some truth in what I said. The punishment had been given as a matter of principle, not for any other reason; it wouldn't prevent him from getting his stripes, it would only put him back three months, not that perhaps. He must know that, he knew it as well as I.

He kicked a pebble along the road with his hob-nailed boot.

"That's not the point," he cried, "can't you understand! I've had enough of France! I've had enough, I tell you! Ah, *nom de*

BARNAVAUX DID PACK DRILL WITH THE CONSCRIPTS HE DESPISED

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Dieu! if only we go abroad again, I'll desert at the first port we put into as true as this is Verrières. There are plenty of other countries where I can enlist, and who'll give me bite and sup, tobacco and a gun—countries that are better than this one, where 'yes' means yes and 'no' means no. What do words mean in France nowadays! Can anybody tell. Can you explain?

"I'm a soldier, impetuous perhaps, but once I've understood an order I've never gone against it. Well, I can't understand things now. Didn't Louise get twenty sous a day as *fille-mère* because she had had a child, no matter whose or anything else? Can you answer that? Well, then it's authorised, it's—it's privileged. And when the illegitimate child, my child, and to all intents and purposes the child of the Government, dies, they say, 'Ah, it's an illegitimate child, and you have asked leave to mourn this worthless child, this nobody, this bastard.' What does France mean! When is she right, and when are those who command and distribute the pence and the punishments anything but raving lunatics. Tell me that if you can!"

I didn't answer. What could I say to him? That it was more or less the same in all countries, that it was no good deserting—and I knew he was only boasting, that he would never do that; Barnavaux is like all Frenchmen, he cannot live anywhere but in his own country, or, at any rate, if not his own country, one that is under her rule is necessary to him—that he would find the same state of things wherever he went, except, perhaps, among the Negroes or Mohammedans: the same cruel struggle between an ancient ideal, coherent like all ancient things, and the new ideal, all the more confused because it is new, in the first place, and the choice between the good and evil of the new has not yet been accomplished; and, secondly, because it is an individualistic, not a socialistic ideal. Barnavaux had always disregarded these fine differences, and in his anger he ignored them entirely, so I only remarked:

"What is it that you want, Barnavaux?"

"What do I want?" he cried, "I want justice! And justice need not necessarily mean that which is best, or most expedient, but a thing that remains unaltered. You can seek as long as you like and you'll

never find a better definition. Another name for justice should be authority.

"What is authority, where is it, tell me! When we're in the Colonies, and hear what's going on in France, we can't make head or tail of it. 'What are they doing, what are they doing,' we think, 'squabbling over trifles when there's work to be done out here, and much to be gained!'

"Now I understand things a little better. They quarrel because there are too many different opinions to consider, just as things go wrong in war-time if the generals are divided.

"Oh, I know what I'm talking about. I'm not such a fool as you seem to think. The dispute between the old and the new is at the bottom of the trouble. Our grandfathers had their good points; they added to the population of the country, and didn't drink so much. And they had their faults too: they were slower and less intelligent, not so active, and, to tell the truth, less brave and more boastful. France has never possessed braver men than she does to-day.

"But I don't care. I want people to make up their minds about these things. How can

a fellow know where he is? How can he serve out his time, or obey? I'm getting like all the others over here."

He raised his hand and said solemnly:

"I'll never obey again!"

THE END

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